

LAUGHTER
and
LIFE

REV ROBERT
WILTAKER

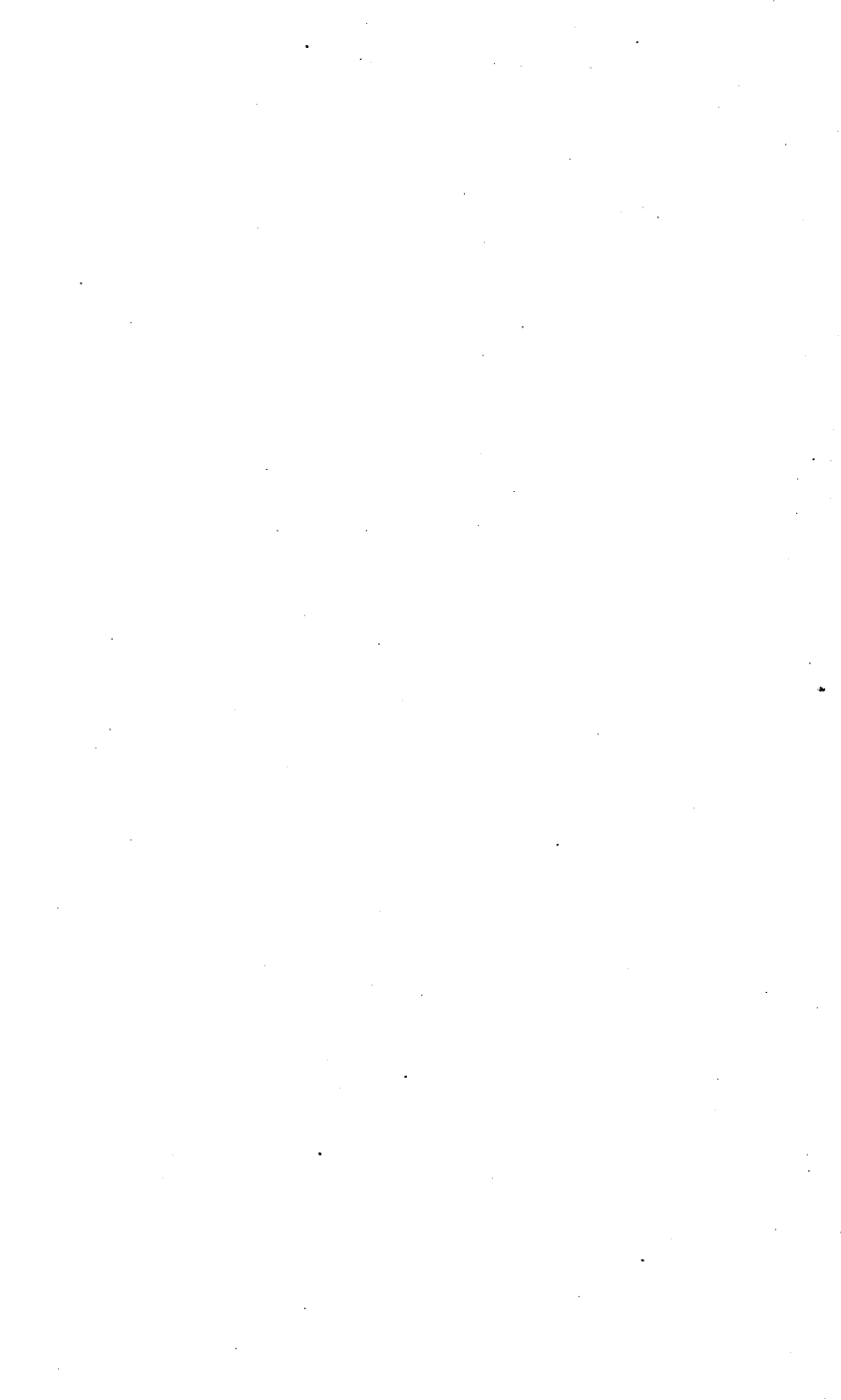
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Laughter and Life

A Christian View of Amusements

By

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A PRIZE BOOK

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TO THE
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Publisher's Note

THIS book is issued by the American Sunday-School Union under the John C. Green Income Fund. It won the second prize offered for the best manuscripts on the subject of *Amusements: How Can They Be Made to Promote the Highest Well-being of Society?* The provisions of the Fund authorize the Union to choose the subject,—which must always be germane to the objects of the Society,—and by owning the copyright, to reduce the price of the book. In this way works of a high order of merit may be put in circulation at a reasonable price. The author is given large liberty in the literary form, style, and treatment of the subject.

The book deals in a fresh and original way with the relation of laughter to life. It shows how one may *laugh for God* as well as *pray to God* and *serve God*. The theme is of universal practical interest to church and Sunday-school workers, parents and teachers, as well as to the increasing number of those who are devoting themselves to the promotion of the play life of the nation. That it won a prize in competition with other fresh and able treatments of the theme indicates its special excellence. It should well serve its mission of making laughter enrich and strengthen rather than debase human life.

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Laughter and Life

CHAPTER I

THE SERIOUSNESS OF LAUGHTER

THERE is nothing in the world more serious than laughter. It is the index of the individual mind, more revealing commonly than tears. A man laughs normally more than he cries, and his laughing is more indicative of character. For the reason also that it is more natural, more spontaneous, more irrepressible, laughing has more to do with the making or unmaking of a man than tears. Some have indeed cried themselves out of the kingdom of heaven,—or the kingdom of the heavenly, if you please,—and have condemned themselves, for the rest of life, to the outer darkness of unnecessary fears and unwholesome fault-finding. But many more have laughed themselves out of all the abiding treasures of life here and life hereafter ;—out of honesty, out of purity, out of decency, out of all sense of God and of good. It is no accident that the writer of the first psalm in the ancient Hebrew hymn-book winds up his description of the negative side of the

blessed life with the picture of a man who sits in "the seat of the scorner." There is nothing so contrary to happiness of a real and permanent character as the wrong kind of laugh. To know how and when to laugh is to know how to live.

Nor are the social consequences of laughter less important than are the individual. "The seat of the scorner" has had more influence in world politics thus far than have the wisest and most serious statesmen. World-peace has been laughed out of court for two thousand years, the laughter growing less pronounced with every century; and it is quite within the memory of those yet young that men have come to consider it without a supercilious smile or an incredulous sneer. The same moral standard for men and women, "the single standard in morals," is still a joke to many, and more provocative of laughter than of legislation. The divorce evil in modern life keeps pace side by side with the immoral witticisms of the daily press at the expense of the home and the marriage relation. So long as the multitude joke at domestic tragedies, the tragedies themselves will be multitudinous. Every nation whose moral standard is low has a high pleasure-seeking temperature. The two great scourges of humanity, greater than war or pestilence, are the love of money unjustly gained, and the love of pleasure unwisely sought. The love of lucre and the love of laughter are still the pathways by

which most men and women are led astray. And it is for pleasure's sake, more than for any other cause, that men love money.

The following incident happened only a few years ago in California,—perhaps the most pleasure-loving state in the Union,—and within a few miles of the city which has sometimes prided itself upon the dubious title, the “Paris of America.” It was a summer Saturday evening, the hour, for many, of rest and of recreation. A young man of twenty-two was in charge of his brother's store while the brother and his family were making a visit to the old home and to the old folks more than three thousand miles away. At the end of a busy and prosperous day, because the banks had not been open since noon and he did not care to leave the receipts of the afternoon and evening in the store, the young man put the money in his hip-pocket, and started to walk home. He was a popular young fellow, liked and trusted by every one who knew him; a Christian man, with an enviable reputation for ability and good-will, and because he was so generally liked and trusted, he in turn liked and trusted every one else.

On the way home that night, however, although he had only a short distance to go along a well-traveled road, he was robbed in a way that should have shamed even a barbarous land. Those who beat him down,—so ruthlessly that he died a few days later from his wounds,—were

boys younger than himself, his own neighbors, and under ordinary circumstances his friends. They had no sense of the real value of money, and they did not rob him primarily for money's sake. Two of them were arrested the next night on their way home from San Francisco, where they had spent the Sunday "shooting the chutes" with a couple of young girl friends and "having a good time" generally. The money which paid for the "good time" for the girls and themselves had been clutched with bloody hands the night before from the pockets of the murdered lad.

Most of the crimes of the world are committed for the sake either of power or of pleasure. Nearly all juvenile crime has "fun" of some sort or other as its object. Nine-tenths of the crimes of violence, whether committed by boys or men, are done directly by those who, if they get money, will spend it at once on what they call "pleasure." Most of the world's horrors have the appetite for "amusement" back of them. Even when the crime is not individual, and there is no conscious pursuit of pleasure at the cost of life, the mischief which men do their fellows is quite generally wrought for the sake of providing favorites of one kind or another with the means of following pleasure. If we do not rob and kill directly to get our own spending-money for "fun," we are much inclined to make light of law and justice to win the smiles and laughing applause of those who

wait upon us or upon whom we spend ourselves. Wrong pleasure-seeking is at the bottom of most of the unnecessary misery of the world.

It is this trait which explains that sinister reference in the old Scripture known to us as "Deborah's Song:"

"Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
 The mother of Sisera cried through the lattice,
 'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
 Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?'
 Her wise ladies answered her,
 Yea, she returned answer to herself,
 'Have they not found, have they not divided the spoil?
 A damsel, two damsels, to every man;
 To Sisera a spoil of dyed garments,
 A spoil of dyed garments embroidered,
 Of dyed garments embroidered on both sides,
 on the necks of the spoil?'"

Back of Sisera, tyrant, murderer and despoiler, were the women of his court, and even his own mother, who were more concerned for the pretty raiment which his victories would bring them, and the delights which his ravishings would add to their amusements and to the amusements of the men with whom they were accustomed to revel, than they were for any considerations of justice and decency and humanity. The deed of Jael, in slaying Sisera by stealth as she did, shocks our moral sensibilities, and Deborah's exultation over it is hard to reconcile with the ordinary understanding of divine inspiration. But to measure

rightly either Jael's dreadful deed, or Deborah's dubious delight in that deed, one needs to study carefully that other figure in the background of the story,—“the mother of Sisera,” who looked “through the lattice,” devoted to her own enjoyments and to the ruthless “fun” of those ancient days, which meant immeasurable misery for the many and the wrecking of a nation and a nation's faith.

There runs through the last book of the Bible, with all its weird and wonderful imagery, something of the same stern strain which startles the superficial reader of Deborah's ode. Here also is a song of triumph, a more extended song for a vastly more spectacular and comprehensive victory. All the world's wickedness, all the piled-up cruelties of the long, long centuries of human oppression, here come to their Megiddo at once. The woman figures here also, both as oppressor and oppressed; both as the inspirer of victory and as one drunk with desire for blood. Here is warfare immeasurable,—defeat and overthrow in which nature is joined with the supernatural in terms that fairly bankrupt language. And through it all there runs again the tragedy of false laughter, the woe of unprincipled pleasure-seeking, the dreadful darkness of “amusement” gone mad.

To understand the sanguinary symbols of the Apocalypse,—the wrath that rejoices not in the

overthrow of an army, but in the overwhelming of a world; not in the discomfiture of an individual woman, but in the utter destruction of the world-city pictured forth as the mother of world-ravishers,—one needs to study thoroughly the moods, especially the pleasure moods, of ancient Rome. See the laughing crowds in Nero's gardens, making merriment all the night long, while burning Christians in their shrouds of fire light up the boisterous festivities. Harken to the roar of the lions in the arena, where the famished beasts are turned loose to feed in public on tender women and children whose only offense is that they have confessed to the pure faith in one "Christos," who himself went to a yet more terrible death, accompanied with wagging of heads and laughter. Or watch,—if you can bid yourself imagine the horrors which were once the favorite pastimes of the mistress of the world,—the insatiate slaughter of slaves from among the brawniest and best of all nations, while the crowds shout their applause at the rare "fun" of blood-letting without limit, and impatiently turn down their thumbs at the bare suggestion of a momentary mercy. Consider these things, and then sit in judgment, if you dare, upon the pent-up indignation of those who, in the face of such a world-mania for amusement at any cost, longed and looked for the overwhelming of the whole vast iniquity in a whirlwind of divine wrath.

And consider also how much of the world's mad devotion to amusement is now and ever has been the bulwark of lawless tyranny and of all manner of social corruption and abuse. Back of every Sisera that the world has ever known ; back of all the throned and fêted wickedness of our own age, which still rules with the ruthlessness of ancient Rome, there is the face of a false and heartless festivity at the latticed window, the dancing figures of those who even to-day get their amusements at the cost of only a little less obvious human holocaust.

The world's spoiling still goes on as a part of the world's sporting very much more than most of us realize. And it is the more to our shame, by reason of all that the martyrs suffered for us, and in view of the twenty centuries of Christian ministry between us and them, that such cruelties as we see in present-day social conditions are the fruit of our modern festivities, and of our utter failure to conform our pleasure-making and pleasure-seeking to the mind of Christ. Nor is there anything which more seriously threatens the stability of our modern civilizations, or which creates more of wrathful contempt toward them, than the revulsion felt by the oppressed of our time, and by those who speak for them, against the callous and often conscienceless merrymaking of to-day. Every revolution in history has been heated to the exploding-point by the mood of those

who made more of their own amusement than of the rights and necessities of their fellow-men.

Is there a more ominous saying of Jesus than this?—"And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man."

It is but a superficial study of these words, also, which concerns itself with them only in a literal way as either history or prophecy. Both of these they are in a larger way than the multitude of commentators have ever noted. Has there ever been a social crisis, a world cataclysm, to which the majority of its victims did not dance in utter obliviousness of the judgment which was about to fall upon them? Rome increased in gaiety as she neared her fall. Back of the French Revolution is the brilliant court of Louis XIV, "Le Grand Monarque," with all the light effervescence of the merrymaking at Versailles,—a merrymaking which did not cease till the guillotine had actually begun its work. When was the slave-oligarchy more facetious and devoted to its festivities than during the days just before the war that deluged our land in the blood of fratricidal strife?

To get at the soul of this saying of Jesus, how-

ever, we need no inquiry as to the exact historical value of his reference to the story of the Noachian deluge, nor as to the particular import of his words in a prophetic way concerning the end of all the ages. Rather do we need the wisdom to read these words in the light of all history, and to catch their significance for our own immediate future. Was it not in the same spirit that Jesus rebuked the leaders of his own generation, because they were so apt at reading the weather-signs and so blind in understanding the far more certain signs that portended their own destruction as a nation? They also danced to their death, in spite of his efforts to sober them and to show them the mischief of their light laughter and their mocking scorn. And we also dance, and laugh, and make merry, while the clouds gather to-day.

Who is there among us more kindly or more human than the poet of our own times, Edwin Markham, who came to his fame through his impassioned plea to the "masters, lords, and rulers of all lands" against their light and sometimes scornful indifference toward "the man with the hoe"? Yet is there not even in his kindly and fraternal verse a touch of the spirit of Deborah's song when he surveys the judgments of history?

"There was no substance in their soaring hopes,
The voice of Thebes is but a desert cry;
A spider bars the road with filmy ropes
Where once the feet of Carthage thundered by.

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“ A bittern booms where once fair Helen laughed ;
A thistle nods where once the Forum poured ;
A lizard lifts, and listens on a shaft
Where once of old the Colosseum roared.”

Great poetry that, and greater prophecy. Who that reads it with any sense of the significance of world-history for our own generation, and the generations yet to be, can fail to wonder whether, back of the proud hopes and vainglory of our own vaunted civilizations, there is any more of substance than there was at the heart of those long-ago empires that are now dust-covered with forgetfulness ?

It is not in the study of our battleships, our military resources, nor yet in “the unseen empire” of finance, that we shall find the answer to those who question the permanence of our present political and industrial order. Neither our statesmen nor our money-magnates are going to determine the destiny of the civilization which holds the helm of the world to-day. It was not Herod but Herodias who slew John the Baptist. And it is not the rulers of our day who threaten most the lives of its prophets. The pleasure-makers have been the mightiest unmakers of both prophets and peoples. They are more dangerous to-day than all the armies of alien races, or all the conspiracies of alienated members of our own race and nation. These are our real anarchists, whose laughter is more destructively explosive than any

bombs that the "reds" have yet invented; for their mistaken merriment is able to dissolve the strongest bands of law and order, and to shatter into nothingness ideals which it has taken centuries to build. These are our "yellow peril," who not merely cheapen the markets of the world and reduce the standard of subsistence, but who bring life itself to impotence and beggary. A nation that seeks only to be amused, and knows not how to seek amusement where wholesome and recreating pleasure is really to be found, is already touched with the hectic flush of death, though for a while its color may be mistaken for the glow of unrestrained life.

And since it is youth that is normally frolicsome and buoyant, and since the young are both masters and victims when false pleasures prevail, it is the "joy-life" of youth which determines what will be the after-life of nations and institutions. Given a race whose young people know how to be amused and how not to be amused, and the future of that race is secure. The kingdom of God is not "eating and drinking," nor yet "marrying and giving in marriage," nor is it, in itself, pleasure-making of any kind. But the kingdom of God comes into the world, and abides in the world, very much as men and women, and especially young men and women, learn the wisdom of a heaven-born laughter and the power of an unsullied joy.

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The Puritans were right in their fear of the world's revelries. They judged not without knowledge when they noted the connection between the merrymaking of the Cavaliers and the rottenness in both Church and State for which these Cavaliers were sponsors. Our own great cities bear witness to the fact that hilariousness of a certain conspicuous sort marks both those who barter individual virtue and those who sell out public rights. The alliance between the vendors of vice and the purchasers of special privilege, by which the centers of our population have been made despoilers both of individual morality and of public opportunity, has been evidenced in a devotion at both ends of society to amusements that are reckless alike of personal and social consequences. At no point are the *habitués* of the slums and the "higher-ups" so much alike as in their common devotion to false ideals of pleasure. Their amusements are not very different in form, and in motive and outcome they are identical to a startling degree.

On the other hand, however, the Puritans were deficient in the matter of affirmative education concerning the joyous side of life. There is such a thing as laughing *for* God and *with* God, instead of laughing *at* God and the things which make for Godlikeness in man. Amusement is more natural than melancholy, and certainly far more healthful. There is no reason to regard despondency as mor-

ally helpful, nor amusement of the right sort as contrary to spiritual health. The very word "solemn" was originally a mirth-suggesting term.

Life is never so serious in the true sense of the word as when it is sanely and generously happy. Heaven means, not more tears, but the wiping away of tears. There is a divine logic back of the irrepressible insistence of faith that immortality and happiness were meant to be one and inseparable. It is because happiness is so good, so exceedingly good, that its prostitution is so bad, so exceedingly bad. It is because happiness belongs so naturally to youth that youth has so much need to guard it jealously. And it is because the ways of false amusement are so strewn with the wrecks both of individuals and of nations, that there is before us no more important work, whether in a personal or in a social way, than the reclamation of the vast areas of human pleasure-seeking. If we let these levels of life fall into neglect, they will prove a veritable dismal-swamp, breeding all manner of miasma, and every kind of noxious growth and every form of destructive life. Drain our amusements of false ideals and plant them with the best fruitage of human sympathy and service, and they will prove to be the very granaries of God. There is no bigger work to which any of us can address ourselves than to teach ourselves and to help others to learn the wisdom of Christian amusement, of sound and unselfish

pleasure-seeking, of laughing in perfect fellowship with our Father in heaven. "For whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do," we are exhorted by the Apostle of most serious purpose and most strenuous life, to do it all "as unto the Lord." And it was the same Apostle who in the midst of much trial exhorted, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." So then we have the authority of Scripture, as we have both of nature and of common sense, for the sanctity of happiness. And, as will later appear, no small part of the Christian life is included in what we are here describing as "laughing unto the Lord."

CHAPTER II

THE CHRIST OF THE PLAYGROUND

THE Christ of the Gospels is a very different figure from the Christ of Catholic art. The face and form which stand forth on the pages of the New Testament present both a stronger and a happier man than the art galleries have ever yet set forth. He is neither the halo-encircled child, in the arms of some Italian or Flemish mother, nor is he the limp corpse, all stained with sanguinary blotches, whose portraiture is an appeal to the violent sympathies of untutored minds. The Jesus of the Gospels is the most masterful and at the same time the most charming figure of history, the Man of all men, divinely human and most humanly divine.

There is a famous passage in the first Gospel in which Jesus is reported to have asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" This question is followed by the more intimate one, "But who say *ye* that I am?" So much attention has been given to this later inquiry, and especially to the strong confession of Peter's faith which it evoked, that very little note has been taken of the answer to the first question. Yet

this other answer throws a flood of light on the impression which Jesus made upon his contemporaries, and it shows how far away from the actual "Son of man" is the pietistic and ecclesiastical Christ. "And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

Now a significant thing about this reply is the revelation which it gives of the manliness of Jesus. We have heard so much about the "meek and lowly Jesus," and we are so accustomed to the artists' presentation of him with sorrowful, submissive, half-feminized face and garb, that it is rather difficult for the moment to take in the full import of these words. But here is the fact that John the Baptist, and Elijah, and Jeremiah were among the strongest and most masculine figures that we meet in all the story of Israel. All three were of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made. Indeed, they might have sat,—any one of them or all of them together,—for James Russell Lowell's famous portraiture in "The Present Crisis" of our own heroic progenitors of the *Mayflower*.

"They were men of present valor, stalwart old iconoclasts,
Unconvinced by axe or gibbet that all virtue was the Past's."

It cannot be denied that this is a rather stern presentation of Jesus. But there are other passages in the Gospels which are fully in accord

with the impression here set forth. The Christ of the whip of small cords was not the anæmic sufferer of a melancholy, medieval art. Neither is the Figure outside the Temple, contemplating its prospective ruin and analyzing the failure of Israel's leaders, as set forth in the tremendous Twenty-third of Matthew, the mild and listless man of the conventional canvas, or of the ordinary oral deliverance. When one reads the Gospels candidly, it is not difficult to understand the statement that the contemporaries of Jesus thought of him as John the Baptist, Jeremiah, or Elijah returned to earth to do battle royal for righteousness.

The old poets were also too much affected by the same over-emphasis on the passivity of Jesus which has affected the artists generally, as witness the following from Thomas Dekker, a notable dramatic writer of the days of James I :

"The best of men
That e'er wore earth about him was a sufferer ;
A soft, meek, patient, humble, tranquil spirit,
The first true gentleman that ever breathed."

The last line is appealing, but the description is neither an accurate presentation of the Jesus of the Gospels, nor a convincing picture of a gentleman. That Jesus had the virtues of gentleness and patience and endurance in a high degree there is no doubt, but this picture needs a strong dash

of virility in it to make it worthy of the approval of the real men of history or of modern life. More persuasive by far is the mere title of Thomas Hughes' famous essay, *The Manliness of Christ*. The man who wrote that book is dear to all schoolboys as the author of *Tom Brown's School-Days*, and its sequel, *Tom Brown At Oxford*. It is an interesting fact that Thomas Hughes was a pupil of the yet more famous Thomas Arnold, the great teacher of Rugby, who was himself a fit disciple of the virile and vigorous Christ. Both these men were gentlemen, and they are far safer guides to a true conception of the sort of man that Jesus was, than any amount of art or poetry which has been patterned after the imaginings of melancholy, cloistered saints. Jesus would be vastly more popular with men if we had not feminized and clericalized half of his manliness away. We have urgent need to get back to the New Testament type.

And the Jesus of the Gospels is as attractive as he is vigorous. He was like John the Baptist, and yet very unlike him. Read Jesus' own contrast of himself with the great preacher of the desert. He is rebuking, with a touch of sarcastic humor, the unreasonableness of the Pharisees, who objected to John because he was *not* a mixer among men, and who objected to Jesus for precisely the opposite reason that he *was*. "But whereunto shall I liken this genera-

tion?" he asks. "It is like unto children sitting in the market-place, who call unto their fellows, and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a demon. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

The reference is evidently to the games which Jewish children of Jesus' day were accustomed to play. Like children of all lands and all generations, in their amusements they imitated their elders, oftentimes using the serious functions of life for sport and entertainment. And these children complained of their companions that first of all they had played "wedding," and afterward they had played "funeral," and in neither case had they been able to suit their captious playfellows or to get them to enter into their sport. "We have piped, and you have not danced, we have wailed, and you did not mourn," or to follow more literally the graphic original, "you did not beat your breasts."

It does not concern us here to dwell upon Jesus' indictment of the Pharisees. It is enough to say that men who do not want to be convinced are very much the same in all ages. Wedding or funeral, the result is identical:—they will not play. Truth cannot be presented in any guise

that is acceptable to the man who does not *want* to accept it. What concerns us more immediately here is the information which is incidentally brought out as to Jesus' interest in the play life of the children, and as to a certain aspect of his own life and character which impressed itself upon his contemporaries. Let us consider the latter of these first.

The virile man is likely to be also the companionable man. Not always is this so, as it appears that John the Baptist lived much apart from his fellows. But this only marks the incompleteness of his character, and was probably due to exceptional circumstances in his upbringing, or to the exigencies of his ministry. But even he had his disciples, who seem to have been warmly and tenderly attached to him. The same remarks apply in a measure to Jeremiah and Elijah. Neither one of them was of the monkish type.

Jesus, however, was not only *like* them; he was *different* from them. The difference is naturally most marked when we contrast him with the one of the three who was nearest to him. His appreciation of John the Baptist was stated in the most positive terms, and is otherwise indicated in his whole attitude toward John. But although Jesus took up the message of John, apparently in much the same words at first, he pursued a very different course, and gave the message with a very different emphasis. Jesus was, to use a modern

term which has a distinctness that compensates for the lack of dignity occasionally attaching to it, a "good mixer." There is no recorded instance of his ever having refused an invitation to dinner. He began his ministry of miracles, according to the fourth Gospel,—which is emphatically the Gospel of his divinity,—by attending a wedding, and replenishing the wine when the supply ran short. The story raises some questions which need not be discussed here. Likewise Jesus' remark in the passage quoted above that certain observers called him "a gluttonous man, and a winebibber," is momentarily disturbing in its inferences. But the big outstanding fact is that Jesus believed in saving life by getting *into* it, not by getting *out* of it. The incarnation was not for him an incident to be identified wholly with his birth; it was the habitude of his life. He lived the incarnation every day.

And it is of no less importance to note that because Jesus entered into human life, and identified himself with it ordinarily and habitually, he entered of necessity and yet willingly into the happy side of life, as well as into its sorrows and sins. That he "bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows" is a fact which can hardly be over-emphasized. But it needs also to be impressed that he knew our joys and shared the happiness and even the humor of life. We have yet to meet frankly the evidences on the pages of the New

Testament of the fine facetiousness of Jesus. The last of the Gospel writers cannot take leave of the story of Jesus without a bit of broad exaggeration, which has in it an obvious touch of humor. "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." To treat those words with a literal sobriety is to impeach the author's wholesome naturalness and sound sense.

Jesus caricatured the Pharisees for their censoriousness. "You are very careful to remove the least splinter from the eye of your neighbor, and cannot see that you have a whole log in your own eye," he remarked,—to put his words into present-day form. And in the same connection, while he warned his followers against an absurd over-seriousness in estimating the faults of others as against one's own shortcomings, he balanced the advice with another illuminating witticism about running to the opposite extreme of maudlin sentimentalism by adding, "Don't cast your pearls before pigs."

But the best evidence of the naturalness, the humanness, the real humor of Jesus is in the fact that he was a much-sought guest, and was even accused of being a boon companion of those who, as the man of the street would now say, liked "good eats" and good times. That the freedom

of his fellowship was grossly misrepresented there is no doubt, but if the Pharisees of his own time were inclined to overstate the companionableness, the real comradeship of Jesus, there is little doubt that modern pietists of the phylactery-wearing, long-faced type have been equally disposed to ignore and obscure it.

In further evidence is the fact that Jesus not only noted the children's games, and was interested in their pastimes, but also that he profoundly interested and attracted the children themselves. Their parents brought them to him, but he took them in his arms, and his own initiative toward them is manifest when he took the child and set him in the midst of the disciples, thus holding up childhood as the ideal of the human side of the kingdom of God. No man could have handled children as he did, nor talked of them after his manner, who was not loved and admired by the children in return.

Now children do not admire either the passive or the melancholy man. More than this, passivity and melancholy commonly go together. It is your strong man, even the man who has large capacity for sternness at times, who is in other moods and under more fortunate conditions a heartily and happily playful man. Virility and laughter are generally on good terms. And the man who is not virile, and who does not know how to laugh, neither receives many invitations to

dinner, nor readily gets the children on his knees. Under normal conditions Jesus was both a virile and a cheerful man.

Here is a modern business man who goes every day to his work in the great city. He has been identified with the financial world for nearly a quarter of a century, and deals every day in figures about stocks and bonds and investments and securities and hard cash, and a lot of other hard things. He is in the vigor of his own strength, a stocky, sturdy man, with a rather quick, imperious way about him which makes the full-grown stranger esteem him as temperamentally somewhat severe. Yet his own lad of ten comes jauntily down to the train to meet him, and goes home with him hand in hand. And both the man and the boy enjoy nothing better than a romp together in which laughter and shout work a transformation in the man's whole appearance and attitude. The very tensivity of the man's make-up and activity lend themselves to an energy of play which is his charm for the boy.

The positive man is the man who gives himself most effectively to the humor and the happiness and the sane amusements of life. That Jesus was a positive and not a negative character is no more certain than that he was, under conditions which afforded opportunity for good cheer and sportiveness, a man of buoyant mood and mind as well. The sanctimonious Christ is not the Jesus of the

Gospels, but a caricature brought forth by a decadent ecclesiasticism. No man could have held so mightily the love and enthusiasm and utmost devotion of a fellowship of hearty fisherfolk,—and especially such a one as Peter,—who did not have vast stores of hearty fellowship in himself. When Jesus “looked upon Peter” the doughty disciple saw a thousand home and table scenes in his eyes. There is only one home scene that remains to us from the thirty years of Jesus’ life before he began his public career, but that one scene, as it is presented to us in the second chapter of the third Gospel, is singularly and strikingly confirmatory of all that has here been said. It is the incident of his journey to Jerusalem and return, when he was twelve years of age. This is the evangelist’s brief remark in explanation of the manner in which his mother Mary and Joseph lost track of him on their way home: “Supposing him to be in the company, they went a day’s journey; and they sought for him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance.”

No such supposition as Mary and Joseph held concerning Jesus could have been possible if they had not already had long experience of his companionableness and the ease with which he was entertained. The irresistible impression of the narrative is that of a child who was liked and likable, a clever, kind, merry lad of twelve years who was so much desired by every one that his

own mother did not know till nightfall that he had not been somewhere in the caravan all day. It is the Christ of laughter, song, and joyousness who is here; the Christ of the playground and not the thorn-crowned Man of the Cross.

The very wonder of those who found him in the Temple, and of those who listened with them to his inquiries and replies, is itself a token of the same thing. Mary and Joseph marveled to find him in such a place, because he was so like any other boy that they had not thought to look for him there. It was only "after three days" that they found him in the Temple, indicating plainly enough that the Temple was no more the first place where they looked for him than the church, or the synagogue, would be the first place where you would look for your boy of twelve in a great city. "Knew ye not that I must be in my Father's house?" as the Revised Version gives Jesus' wondering reply to his troubled mother's protest, has indeed at first sight a flavor of unnaturalness about it. But that is only because we have not yet learned to think of religion as a wholly natural thing. Jesus' answer would have little force if it were a disclaimer of his real humanity. It was as if he had said, "Why should you think, because I am a boy among boys as you know me, full of life and play and enjoyment, that I could not enjoy my Father's house? One doesn't have to be unnatural to be religious, does

he?" And because he was so wholly a real lad they marveled at his clearness of mind and his intensity of religious interest, even as we are still surprised, if not a little shocked, whenever religion is treated in the manner of every-day life.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF PLAY

THERE is only one passage in the Bible where the expression "boys and girls" is found. It is part of a very graphic picture in the prophecy of Zechariah. The prophet has been reciting the jealousy of "the Lord of hosts" for Jerusalem. It has been a fierce, sometimes a consuming, jealousy. But always the jealousy has been for Jerusalem's good. And now comes the promise of peace and prosperity for the city, when Jerusalem shall be the "holy city" indeed. As the prophet sees it, the picture is not that of "a lonely cross upon a lonely hill." A happier hope and a more joyous expectation stir the heart of the ancient seer. It is rather the picture of old men and old women sitting in the sun by the roadside,—so old that for very age they have need of staffs on which to lean, but tranquil, untroubled, and serene in the security of a city which has ceased to be girt about by alien armies and trodden down of nations which come ravaging from afar. The picture is verified with a "Thus saith the Lord;" and included under the same signature, standing out upon the same canvas, is this counterpart of untroubled old age,

—“And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” All the open spaces of the city are seen full both of playful children and of peaceful old age.

There is a logical connection between the two aspects of this scene. The old age that muses in untroubled rest upon the supporting staff is itself the legitimate outcome of that freedom and fullness of life which first of all expresses itself in the playing of boys and girls. There is very little serene old age where there has been little or no youthful play. Nor can any city be said to be truly civilized until all its affairs, even to its streets, are dominated by the welfare of the grandsire and the child. The social order which gives abundance of play at one end of life, and abundance of peace at the other end of life, is the only social order with which a really rational and a really religious people can be content. The city of Zechariah's vision has never yet been, but it is going to be. That it is on the way is no more evidenced by our old-age pensions and other provisions for the sunny security of those who have come to fulness of years, than it is by our present emphasis on play and playgrounds with relation to the education and development of the child. We do not yet realize to the full in a social way the vast consequences of sanity in our amusements, the utter seriousness, in relation to the general welfare, of our laughing moods and our provision for

feeding the appetite for pleasure. Not yet as followers of Jesus do we have the courage of his naturalness, and the enthusiasm for such an entire incarnation of the divine in the whole of human life as he himself expressed. But we are learning, through much unnecessary cost in life and treasure, how destructive false amusements can be. We are learning also, in spite of much timidity of soul, that real religion has nothing to fear from real living. And over against the damage of a perverted pleasure instinct and the mischiefs of morbid religiousness, we are coming slowly but certainly to see how absolutely natural, how inevitably human, play is.

Had we "considered the lilies" a little more, we might have seen this long ago. At least, if we had followed the example of Jesus in turning to the world of nature round about us, and to the phenomena of every-day life for tokens of the divine, we might much sooner have noted the part which play occupies in the economy of the natural order, in what we may call God's commonplace school.

That which we call nature is running over with play. Every spring-time morning is musical with the song of birds. Every pasture and every woodland place where the creatures of field and forest have any sense of security for their young, is riotous with the gamboling of young life. Puppies and kittens, the children's pets, are so habit-

ually humorous in all their bearing, so over-running with continual laughter, as it were, that one must either believe the Creator had no part in making them, or else admit that fun and frolic are written large on the Almighty's works. The very cubs of the lion and the tiger, in their natural lairs and when well fed, are living examples of nature's proneness to happiness. Life laughs through nature even in the fierceness of the wild.

Nowhere does life laugh more blithely, nowhere is natural play more captivating, than in the human child. And nowhere is the serious purpose of mirthfulness in the natural order more manifest than in the infancy and youth of man. New England has always been serious enough, and it is fitting that from a New England writer should come this earnest statement of the momentous meaning of play in relation to the evolution of life: "More important than the playground is the play. It is well that children should play in a safe place, but it is absolutely necessary that they should play somewhere if they are to grow up at all. For there is no doubt now, I think, in the minds of educators that play builds the child. It is the method that Nature has provided for his development. . . . The child who is deprived of his chance to play is deprived of his opportunity to grow up."

So writes Joseph Lee, a social worker of national prominence, and the author of *Constructive*

and Preventive Philanthropy, in an article in *The Craftsman* for March, 1914, under the suggestive title, "Restoring Their Play Inheritance to Our City Children." Nor is it only the reference to "city children" which is suggestive. "Their play inheritance" is that portion of the title which comprehends the children everywhere, and most suggests the vital function of play.

That function is definitely stated in the four words, "Play builds the child." Whether in the human child, or in the offspring of the lower orders of life, play is a primary part of the building process of God. There is in it the exercise that makes for strength, the glow that makes for beauty, and the social contact that most effectively relates the individual to his kind. When we consider what these things mean,—strength, beauty, fellowship,—and when we observe the part which laughter, sport, amusement, play, one and all, hold in the critical period of the child's development, it is hard to overestimate the natural value of the frolic and merriment of youth. God has not only set upon them the warning signal of the disastrous consequences of the misuse of mirth, but he has set in evidence quite as clearly the rich rewards which follow upon a proper use of the laughter side of life. Thus, it is written in our very nature that to refuse to play is to refuse to grow; to despise amusement is to despise the blush of beauty and the glow of health; to

refrain from frolicsomeness is to set oneself apart a solitary prisoner within barriers of misunderstanding and contempt. Nature says more commandingly than any human captain of the playground ever said it: "If you would hold your own or have any standing with your fellows, *play.*"

Play builds the child; nor does its building cease with childhood's years. There is need of laughter so long as there is life. Not only is it true that in a multitude of instances education ceases too soon because men and women allow themselves to lose too easily the inquisitiveness of youth, but also that too often vigor itself declines and the moods of men and women are low because they think of play as the exclusive right and privilege of the child. Getting old is largely forgetting how to be amused.

One of our leading woman's magazines, a little while ago, told the following story: A tired and broken mother, heavily burdened "with much serving," went to her physician for advice, conscious that she was on the verge of nervous prostration. The doctor talked with her long and intimately and then gave her this apparently whimsical counsel, "I want you to laugh fifteen minutes every day." The woman protested at the artificiality of such a course, since she had no inclination to laugh with any such regularity or continuity. But the physician was steadfast in

his advice, and insisted that whether she felt like laughing or not she was to go through the motions of the exercise. The very effort to do so affected her to spontaneous laughter. Her effort and example, in turn, affected the family in the same way. Mirth and vivacity took the place of a too serious atmosphere in the home. The result was not only the restoration to health of the wife and mother, but a toning up of the whole family life through a softening and gladdening of social relations in the home circle. That which had been begun as a matter of faithfully following out a singular medical prescription, and with an awkward consciousness of artifice behind it, was continued as the natural expression of a changed attitude of mind, and with a thorough-going conviction back of it of the moral as well as the physical value of the joyous life.

“The Lord loveth a cheerful (Greek, *hilaros*) giver.” Giving is self-expression; else it is not real giving at all. And self-expression is never more apt and serviceable than when it is touched with laughter. There is sound psychology back of the merriment which generally characterizes those who are known as good solicitors, or “good beggars.” Begging appeals without a touch of humor are not likely to incite to generous giving, except when the pressure of tragedy is upon the hearts of those who give. Neither is there much of effective kindness apart from smiles. Too

much goodness is spoiled because it is not cheerful goodness. In every department of life men who are afraid to laugh express themselves poorly. Nature is on the side of the physician who smiles. Humor is a natural corrective of the intricacies and absurdities of the law. Cervantes availed himself of one of the mightiest weapons in nature's armory when he laughed out of court the sham chivalry of old through the antics of Don Quixote. Health of body, health of mind, health of soul, are none of them far removed from the kind of hilarity that God loves.

Let us not think of play on the physical side, then as having to do only with the exercise of undeveloped muscles, the method for maturing the young through unforced activity. This it is, but very much more. Play, whether in old or young, may be defined as the spontaneity of self-expression. It is the cleansing overflow of life. Without it life is a stagnant pool, a closed fire, a corpse in which the blood has ceased to flow. Cheerful giving of oneself in one form or another,—happy, exuberant, playful self-expression,—is to both child and man what the putting forth of leaves is to the tree, what the babbling of the brook is to the stream, what the up-leap of the flame is to the fire. Play is more than nature's way of securing exercise; it is exercise plus all that cheerfulness implies.

And beauty is just as truly the gift of God as

strength. It is quite as much to be desired in its place. If it is possible to quote Scripture in depreciation of beauty, it is equally easy to cite passages which cast contempt on strength. Both beauty and strength may be so emphasized as to become a vanity, but as nature knows them they are both good, and are alike tokens of inner health and abounding life. Laughter is nature's boudoir quite as much as nature's gymnasium. It is there that she rubs in her cosmetics as well as the oil of strength. In the natural laboratories of life play produces with equal facility unforced activity and unconscious beauty. Even an ugly face is illumined by a smile. Old age grows young again when gladness chases the wrinkles of the years away. What the play of light and shadow is to the desert, fun and frolic are to the face sallow'd o'er with care. Liveliness and loveliness have more than an affinity of sound for each other. They who laugh for God are touched instantly with the "beauty of the Lord."

Amusement of the right sort is to a man what sunshine is to the face of nature under favorable conditions. Even sunshine may scorch and destroy, but this is not its function in nature's normal moods. It is meant to fructify and to beautify, to touch the earth with the up-leaping activity of life, and to make even the desolate places smile with a delightsomeness all their own. So is it with the play instinct in man. It is both life-giv-

ing and beauty-bestowing. And the one is as truly a part of its divine intention as the other. There would be more both of beauty and of strength if men would learn better how to laugh and how to play as God meant them to laugh and to play.

Nor do these two phases,—strength and beauty,—exhaust the natural utility of laughter and sport. There is no mightier social cement than amusement of a natural and wholesome kind. Man may work alone after a fashion, but it is well-nigh impossible for man to play alone. Play is essentially a group exercise. It does not make for activity or for beauty more inevitably than it makes for sociability. Laughter is a solvent which dissipates the asperities of individual interests and idiosyncrasies as almost nothing else will do. There would be vastly more co-operation in the world's labor if there were more of unselfish mutuality in the world's play.

Play builds the child:—builds him in strength, builds him in beauty, builds him in fellowship with all his kind. Even wild animals naturally destructive of one another have been taught to live on terms of peace through the discipline of youthful play. The playgrounds of our public schools have been more effective recruiting-stations for democracy than have been the text-books which the children have studied. International athletic meets have helped to break down race prejudice. The

man who can make both sides laugh can almost always stay a fight. The world's amusements ought to be and can be among the world's mightiest peacemakers, not only building society as well as the individual into strength and becomingness, but building up that world federation of every nation, and kindred, and tribe that is to be.

Because play is natural, however, and because, as nature gave it, it has such manifold and mighty ministry, play, to do its best work, must be kept natural. Nature is on the side of amusement only when amusement is on the side of nature. There is nothing of youthfulness, and very little of naturalness, about much that passes current as sport, and therefore it does not make for the upbuilding of life. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine," but like many another medicine to-day, there are a good many imitations of the merry heart which are sold under the false pretense of being just as good. And that other Scripture, "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast," while it may be and ought to be suggestive of enjoyment and re-invigoration, is too often like the feast overdone, or the table unwisely provided, more suggestive of an indigestible surfeit and shortened days. There is quite as much danger to the body, and a good deal more danger to the soul, whether of the individual or of society, from poisoned laughter than there is from poisoned meat.

Nature cannot be quoted on the side of either

specialized or commercialized play. She knows nothing of "rooters" and "side-lines." Her play is as personal and democratic as it is spontaneous and sincere. She has no paid clowns, and no high salaried referees. She is not in harmony, either by her own example or by the penalties that she exacts from those who depart from her example, with six days of grinding labor and a "week-end" of demoralizing "fun." Horses may be worked to death by man, but they do not naturally either work themselves or play themselves into premature graves. It is the human who both toils and amuses himself to death. Nature does not choose a few to be athletes and actors all their days, and the rest to be an audience for them. Perhaps we may not press to the utmost the analogies of nature, but when we consider the matter of amusement, this part of the upbuilding process of God's world around us cannot be used to justify either the professional fun-maker or the man whose concern is to make money by furnishing a forced merriment for his kind. The natural function of play,—to build up the man in strength, beauty, and unity with his fellows,—requires for its largest utility much more of naturalness, simplicity, and democracy in play.

Every man, if he is to get out of his play faculties what nature has to give him, must develop the resources of laughter, play, and amusement, which are *within himself*. The evils of sport are nearly

all professional and commercial. Whatever of playfulness we may find in Jesus, when he is seen through natural eyes, there was absolutely not a whit of subsidized and specialized "fun" about him. He was too entirely divine to be anything but entirely natural. And this, in a word, is what is the matter with the major part of the world's amusement and amusement-seeking today. The whole field of healthful merriment has been fenced about with staring walls of artifice, which are painted from top to bottom with the dollar sign. Play is not natural as a profession. Our modern players are, for the most part, as little of a Christian product as the professional jesters of medieval courts. No man with a Christian conception of life could wish to give himself to such a part. What we would not choose for ourselves, we have no Christian right to impose upon another.

But leaving this matter of the Christian ideal aside for the moment, the unnaturalness either of being hired to laugh, or of hiring another to laugh for us and to make us laugh, is sufficiently manifest. It is the artificiality of modern life which justifies this artifice. Play in nature is a part of life, not something bought to cover up the evasion of all-round living. Play in nature is personal, spontaneous, not a vicarious sacrifice of creative intention on the part of one for a dubious diversion of another. In nature the laughter

that does not cease is idiotic, and the laughter that is hired is impossible. If we are going to justify amusement, then, because it is natural, because we find it in the child and in the young of every creature as one of the most effective of the Creator's instruments for accomplishing the most beneficent ends of life,—growth, attractiveness, fellowship,—we must study to make our own amusements as free from artifice and barter as possible. Only so can they function as nature intended them. Whatever there is of salvation in laughter is one with God's salvation everywhere, and here also we have need to remember that it is not "of works" but is indeed the "free gift of God."

CHAPTER IV

IS HAPPINESS THE GREATEST GOOD?

STANDING in the entrance-way of a large dry-goods store on one of the busiest street-corners in Los Angeles, this bit of conversation was heard by the writer as it suddenly rose, clear and distinct above the sea of sound: "*Where are you going, Madge?*"

It was a casual inquiry, addressed by one young woman to another, and the answer itself was lost in the swirl of the human stream. For this very reason, perhaps,—that the question broke in so abruptly upon the rush of daily commercialism, and that it stood apart almost as if it were a disembodied voice,—the inquiry remained as a kind of challenge to human life itself. The name but gave it a personal quality, made even more personal by its intimate, familiar form. It was as if the soul of companionship, in the very midst of the multitude and of the thronging of immediate interests, had raised the issue, "*What is it all about, and whither is our ultimate quest?*"

Quite in accord with the feeling inspired by this question, if it be allowed to arrest the im-

agination, is the fact that in all ages the study of ethics,—that branch of philosophy concerned with character and conduct,—has resolved itself sooner or later into the inquiry so aptly phrased in the old church catechism :

“*What is the chief end of man?*” The catechism answered its own inquiry in its own deeply serious way: “*To glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.*” It was a dignified answer, more dignified than definite, as we think of it to-day. There is not much of dignity, not much of apparent seriousness, in the repartee of the modern humorist to this question, but it is definite enough in its way, and the very humor of it gives it a certain right to be considered in this discussion of the laughter side of life. “*The chief end of man,*” says this smiling philosopher, “*is the upper end!*”

Each of these answers condemns the empty and purposeless life. Let us take the lighter answer first. If it be true that a man's head is of more consequence than his feet; that it is his ability to think, and not merely his ability to run about, which counts; that he is most significant, not at the point where he touches the ground, but at the point where he is nearest the skies, then play itself must mean for him more than natural exercise and enjoyment. His “upper end,” if it is indeed his “chief end,” to take the flippant on terms of their own philosophy, ought to dominate both his

work and his play. And there are few who will assert that either the industry or the amusement of the present time is rational in a high degree. We could therefore do far worse than to take this humorist's answer in a serious way.

But the former answer, in spite of its somewhat formal sound for us of to-day, is the far better reply. It is better with respect to both work and play. There would be a revolution in industry at once if men were really persuaded that the fundamental purpose of "business" is to glorify God, and to enter into man's inheritance of everlasting fellowship with the divine. And the question of what amusements are good and what amusements are evil is seen only in a high and clear light when it falls under the illumination of such a high definition of life.

The primary mistake in much of our discussion of amusements is a failure to relate them in any large way to life itself. We go after our "good times" as we go after our gains, with nothing but the immediate object in view. It is the day's pleasure, as it is too often the day's work, which fills all our vision, until we see and seek nothing beyond. If there is need of the question, "Where are you going?" at the door of every factory, and office, and store, there is even greater need of it at the door of every playhouse, and over the gates of all our "recreation" parks. Never is it more true than when we laugh and play that

what we do at any moment needs to be at least sub-consciously related to the real object and end of life.

Now there is an ideal which covers all contingencies, and knows no exceptions. It is a criterion of both character and career from which there is absolutely no escape. There is nothing which a man can do that may not be justly brought to the bar of this inquiry: *Does it look toward perfection?* If it does not, it is condemned by every sound canon of reason and right. If it does, it stands approved, however the world to-day may mock it and misunderstand it. There is no rank or condition in life which is exempt from trial in this truly universal and genuinely catholic court. To make the most of oneself, and to play a full part in helping to make the most of the world in which we live, is the one ideal which serves as a touchstone for every possible situation to which either the individual or any group of individuals may come. Kingdoms and empires, courts and officials of every kind, schools and churches, the home, and even the lap of motherhood itself, must all, in the last analysis, submit themselves to this judgment, and stand or fall according to their ability to meet this test, *Do they "make good"?* The very phrase itself condemns our common application of it to mere mercantile success, or to the winning of popular applause. Nothing "makes good" which does

not make for good. Nothing is holy which does not make whole. Nothing is valid which does not add value. In the procession of life every step is a mistaken step which does not move in the direction of life's ultimate goal.

And, if there is anything that the world greatly needs, it is to feel the harmony of real pleasure-making and real perfection. There is so much of sham and artifice with respect to both. Our notions of play are altogether too light, and our notions of perfection are altogether too heavy. The very term "nonsense" is a libel on the pleasure side of life. The first definition of "sober" in the Standard Dictionary is "possessing or characterized by well-balanced and properly controlled faculties." Who would wish to possess or to be characterized by poorly balanced or ill controlled faculties? The same dictionary gives the following as its sixth and final definition of the word, but marks it "Scotch and obsolete," "characterized by smallness or poorness." Alas! that impression of the word is neither limited to the canny Scotchman, nor is it yet wholly out of date. Originally, however, the word simply meant "not intoxicated," and to identify it with the word "melancholy," which is derived from the Greek word for "black bile," is to intimate that happiness is not a natural thing but is artificially created.

The sober man, then, is simply the man who is

“not intoxicated.” Does drunkenness make for a steady gait? Certainly not! Nor does any kind of evil or excessive indulgence make for a well balanced manhood or womanhood. If we would but see the matter sensibly, all manner of intoxicating excitement which passes for amusement is as poor an imitation of real pleasure as the staggering step of the drunkard is a miserable makeshift for walking. The fun that goes that kind of gait needs to be checked up with the consciousness of the real objective of life. There is nothing to hinder any of the King’s children from skipping along the King’s highway, as they go their way home, with laughter and song betimes. They who go moping along such a noble course are not worthy either of their origin or of their destiny, and can be excused only when they have suffered deprivation and oppression from their companions in the way. Even so, there is frequently, in laughter, liberty from much injustice and wrong. But to stagger heavenward, besotted with a maudlin hilarity, is to duplicate the shame of the man who goes to his lighted cottage and his waiting wife under the influence of liquor.

While we are dealing with words, let us look a moment at the word “perfect” itself. It means simply the “finished” thing. It comes from the Latin, and consists of two words which are most easily and literally translated “through” and “do.” The “perfect” life, therefore, is that which

is "thoroughly done," or "done through;" the imperfect life is the "half-baked" life. Why should any one wish to live such a life? Or why should it be thought that the whitish pallor of the half-done loaf, as compared with the golden brown appearance of the perfectly baked bread just from the oven, argues against happiness as the accompaniment of perfection? The color on the loaf that marks its perfection is the color that is most pleasing to the eye, even as the smell is most pleasing to the nostril. And the pleasure that goes with genuine moral perfection is the tint that is truest to the genius of happiness.

Real goodness has always, to use old Scripture phraseology, "a sweet-smelling savor." The man who thinks of happiness and perfection as inconsistent does not know either of them as he should. Perfectness and pleasantness are never far apart. To think of life in terms of perfection is to fill both the reality and the ideal with abundance of joy. It is only the fun and frolic and amusement that fit in with the consciousness of a perfect purpose and a purpose of perfectness that are fun and frolic and amusement indeed. If you cannot laugh for God, and with the thought of God in your mind, you have either a very mistaken notion of God or a very unhealthful idea of laughter. You need to get rid of both.

All that God wants of you is your good, and the world's good. What is there to make you

melancholy, "bilious" in a word, about that as an ideal of life? Would you have him want less? Would you want less yourself? Is there a simpler or a safer guide to the happiness that will not leave you with a "dark brown taste in your mouth" than the pole-star of this one illuminating purpose,—to "make good" in everything you do? What amusement do you want that is an abuse—either of your own self or of others? The commonest word for sin in the Bible means primarily a "failing to hit the mark." Where is the "fun" in that? Take the light out of delight and what have you left? Fanciful, you say. Perhaps so, judged superficially. But this is not fanciful;—that when a man once gets a true sense of where he is going in life, he has a new song on his lips, and can play with a lightsomeness of heart which he never before knew.

Years ago some boys gathered one winter morning around the "Liberty Pole" in the center of a "common" in an eastern town. One of them suggested to the rest that they try to see which could make the straightest path through the snow to the common's edge. When they compared results, all the paths were found to zigzag a good deal, except one. They asked the boy who had made it, "How did you do it, Freddy?" "Aw, it was easy enough," he replied. "You see that tree? Well, I just fixed my eyes on it, and walked straight toward it." The other boys had

looked at everything and hence at nothing, or else they had looked at their feet.

The straight life is the definite life, and the straight path even to happiness is the path that has a fixed goal at the end. No man is ready to be amused who has not a measurement for his amusements big enough to take in the whole of life. Before you go anywhere for fun, you need to know where it is that you and the world are going in earnest. If you get your bearings right, it will not lessen your merriment, or decrease your delights. You can dance on deck with all the more assurance when you have seen the compass and know you are in accord with the stars. Get acquainted with the ideal of perfection, and you will find happiness exceedingly anxious on her part to get better acquainted with you.

CHAPTER V

“WHO’S WHO” IN MORALS?

A YOUNG woman in Seattle was talking with the pastor of the church which she attended. He was urging upon her the duty and the opportunity of the Christian life. She was reserved and evasive. At length, encouraged by the openness of his manner and the urgency of his argument, she made this confession, “I suppose I ought to be a Christian, but I love to dance, and I do not believe that a church member ought to dance.”

The minister was only a little older than the girl with whom he talked. He had never danced, and dancing had never particularly appealed to him. In this instance he made the mistake of trying to argue with the girl on her own ground, instead of standing on the ground of his first insistence, which was the claim of the Christian life. He talked with her about dancing, instead of talking about life itself. He could not confute her, and he only confused himself. Not until afterward did he clearly see that much more than dancing was involved.

There may be room for direct argument con-

cerning the question as to whether dancing is good or bad. To this question we shall come a little later in the course of this discussion. But the girl put the question where many people put it, and just where it does not belong. If there is any issue at all about dancing, the issue is not whether a church member ought, or ought not, to dance; it is whether any one can dance and keep step with the harmony of life itself.

The prime mistake of this young woman, which the young minister was not at the time quick enough to see, was in the supposition that there is one moral standard for church members and another moral standard for those who are not members of a church. The mistake is common, very common, indeed, although not always as naïvely stated. There are many of maturer years who are ready to maintain with regard to much larger issues that the moral obligation is not one and the same for all men and women, but that duty depends, to a great degree, upon situation and profession.

To be all that each of us can be, and to help others to realize themselves individually and collectively, is an objective which cannot recognize any excuse that will allow any one to slip out. Whether or not we have the right to do this thing or that, is not conditioned by sex, or by profession, or by any incident of situation, but fundamentally by its relation to life itself. *Does*

it help you to live? Does it make more effective or less effective your helpfulness in relation to other lives? These are the issues, and the only issues, whether you are man or woman, church-member or outside the church, Pharisee or publican, bond or free. Anything is right for any one which makes good in terms of life. Nothing is right for any one which does not make good in terms of life. To live to the utmost is an obligation resting equally upon all, whether the obligation is admitted or not. The moral law is one, and there are none who are specially privileged or exempt.

The purpose of play is the enrichment and the enlargement of life. Any play which accomplishes this end is good for any one at any time. Any play which makes against a larger and a richer life is wrong for every one, and everywhere. No amusement is wrong which helps us to live more effectively. No amusement is right which hinders the effective life. The law is simple, and it is one and invariable for all.

There is a popular impression that a minister ought to be a better man than other men. But even our human laws do not recognize either lesser or greater guilt with respect to a minister's relation to what the law defines as crime. A murder committed by a minister may cause more public scandal, but the courts treat the offense, if proved, exactly the same. He is a murderer because he is

a responsible moral being, not because he is a minister, nor yet because as to sex he is a man. Wherein we fall short of this moral equality before the law the failure is sentimental and not legal; it has to do with the defective pursuit of our ideals, and not with the ideals themselves. Crime is crime whether the criminal is a church-member or not.

And play is play for the same fundamental cause, that the criterion of conduct is its relation to life itself. “To be or not to be, that is the question,” and, from the standpoint of morals, being means vastly more than the continuance or non-continuance of life in the body, or even existence itself. It means to be true to the ends of existence, to be worthy of life’s ultimate purpose, to be in the way of perfecting oneself and the whole social order of which we are necessarily a part. There is no legitimate amusement for any one which is not legitimized by the judgment of life itself, by whether it fulfils that for which life is.

It is good to state this over and over, because the principle has been, and is, so much overlaid and obscured. With all our emphasizing of it, there will be many who will not want to measure amusements in the light of this illuminating principle, but will still darken counsel with all sorts of individual evasions and conceits. We do this continually, not only with reference to issues

of fun and laughter and play, but with respect to what we very dubiously term the more serious concerns of life. There is really only one serious concern in life, and that is to live, to live indeed. All things bear upon this, and therefore all things are serious in the right sense of that word. Laughter may, on occasion and in particular situations, be more effective than toil in perfecting life in relation to its deepest purpose. Work may be as indifferently successful as play. But work and play are both but tools, and the man himself is the end. And when we think of the man himself as the end,—the man as an individual, and the man as a social factor,—both play and work are brought to one and the same judgment-bar, and the law by which they are judged is so simple that even a child may understand.

Does it help you? Does it help you to help others? These are the testing acids, whether you apply them to the work side of life, or to the other side, which we call amusement or play. In regard to both of these there may appear to be room for considerations of sex and circumstance and situation, but it will be found, upon closer examination, that the law is actually one and the same for all.

It may be granted that moral innocence or guilt is, in a measure, relative to moral consciousness and sensibility. The thing that I feel is wrong is made more wrong for me to the ex-

tent that I violate my conscience in doing it, whether it is wrong objectively and universally or not. Yet even here the test is essentially one,—the relation of the act to the perfecting of life.

The good or evil of each particular act of work or play must be measured finally by its actual results, and not by our feeling about it, just as the value of our food depends ultimately, not upon how it tastes to us, but upon how it digests and assimilates in the body. Palatableness may have to be considered, but it is not the first or the foremost consideration. There are medicines that are bad to take, and poisons that the corrupted appetite craves with a terrible craving. So likewise there are things we dislike to do which act like a tonic upon the moral nature, and there are indulgences of various sorts that we crave,—usually in the measure of our surrender to them,—which are enervating and destructive in a high degree. The theory that things are right or wrong according to our thought of them, falls down when it is given a long enough test, so that actual tendencies and effects have a chance to work themselves out.

The judgments of conscience are based largely upon custom and education. That which we are accustomed to do we are prone to think is right to do. Do anything long enough, and you will find some way of justifying it to yourself. This

it is which explains Alexander Pope's famous verse :

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen ;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

Men have been known to observe their devotions with conscientious regularity and sincere enjoyment while in charge of slave-ships in the holds of which were huddled hundreds of human beings in the most abject misery and want, with never a thought apparently that there was anything to disturb the conscience in the situation. Whether it concerns the work side of life or the play side of life, an uninstructed conscience is a most unreliable guide. It is not what we think right that is right, but only that which works out righteousness. Any other standard is likely to lead to the justification of the worst things that men and women can do.

Nor is the issue of influence determinative of right and wrong any more than are the judgments of conscience. The notion that some men and women can act with greater moral freedom because they have less responsibility toward their fellows is a very deceptive and dangerous kind of reasoning. A thing is not right for you because you have a less instructed conscience than your fellows, though the measure of your guilt in doing it may be affected thereby, if you act

against what you feel to be the right. Nor is a thing right for you because you think yourself less accountable to others than some one else. The reach of influence is not to be measured by any instruments which we have.

“ Ours is the seed-time, God alone
Beholds the end of what is sown ;
Beyond our vision, weak and dim,
The harvest-time is hid with him.”

Nature treats with equal justice those who make mistakes, whether they make them unwittingly or not. There are no aristocrats in the courts of natural law. The captain who drives his ship onto the rocks by a misreading of his compass is engulfed quite as remorselessly as the captain who plays the fool and does not care what his compass says. The fool who does right gets the benefit of it, and the wise man who does wrong gets the harm. There are no favorites at the bar of God, and no man makes or unmakes the laws of the universe to suit himself.

With equal impartiality does nature weigh the influences of men. No man can do good or evil to himself alone. The radiation goes forth, and no one is in position to measure the relative importance of this or that man's life to the universe. The mother of many children may seem to be in a position where her acts and words are of more consequence than the sayings and doings of the

solitary woman who knows neither kith nor kin, but the measurement of their influence only God understands.

Here is Elizabeth Clephane, an obscure Scotch lassie, who dies in her youth, and apparently leaves no influence of consequence behind her. And then comes the hurrying American evangelist and his singing companion, and at a railway station the singer chances to get a copy of a newspaper with a few lines of verse in it written by the dead girl years before. There is a great meeting of many thousands in another city; a mighty sermon by the mighty evangelist, then at the height of his power; and an instant demand for some song that shall voice the spirit of the thousands who are there hungering for God as they have never hungered for him before. The evangelist hesitates; then draws from his pocket the obscure verses of the obscure writer which he has clipped from the obscure paper, sets them before him on the organ, and begins to play. And God gives his music wings, and the simple Scotch girl's rendering of the marvelous parable of the Master carries all over the world the passion of the One who left the "ninety and nine" to seek the sheep that was lost, in accents that are still living, though both evangelist and singer are gone.

Now you may say that such survivals of influence are very rare; that such immortality as

came to Elizabeth Clephane does not happen to those of like obscurity and humble gifts once in a thousand years. And what if it is so? How many of the stars that stud the heavens do you actually see, and what do you know, by the casual vision of the natural eye, as to their relative size and brilliancy? And even if you can affirm their magnitude, and measure in relative terms the intensity of their light, what do you know of the part which they play in the scheme of the universe? There are those who call ours the “sorrowing star.” Others, who speak more scientifically, describe in terms of inferiority the place of the earth even in our own solar system, and do not hesitate to say that it is but an inconspicuous speck in the totality of the universe. Yet be it or be it not the “sorrowing” planet among God’s worlds, and be it ever so small as compared with others whose light hardly touches our night with even a pin-point of radiance, it is not possible for any one to measure the majesty and significance of the divine operations here. It may be that our planet is a veritable field of Waterloo in the mighty contest of right and wrong on the broad and illimitable areas of the seen and the unseen.

And if we may not measure the significance of our world among the multitudes of other worlds, who shall assume to measure the significance of any man among his fellows? “There are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall

be last," was one of the profound paradoxes of Jesus. And again, "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness." Still further Jesus said to the prominent religious leaders of his day, those who reckoned themselves, and were reckoned, as the men of chief influence, "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." Who shall say that influence is in proportion to prominence and acceptance among men to-day?

No, God is not publishing any "Who's Who" in morals. No man knows his place in the universe, or the measure of what he does or fails to do. A man is bound, not only for what he is, but for what he ought to be, and to this one man is bound as much as another. His conscience is but the chart of the sea over which he sails. It may be right or it may be wrong with respect to this or to that part of the course which he takes. But the sea exists in *fact*, not on his chart alone; and the judgment of how and whither he goes is, finally, not the judgment of what he thinks about it, but of how his thinking accords with eternal fact. He sails not alone, but in the midst of a vast company. Whether he is leader or follower he himself hardly knows. Who shall be

affected by his successes and his failures only eternity itself can tell. He has no more right to reckon his life of less consequence than another’s than he has to reckon it of more. It is his trust, to be carried out as sacredly on his part as the trust of any other soul. Where he is, or what he is as to his circumstances, or what his professions may be, are all minor matters, of importance only as they help or hinder him in realizing the end of life itself.

In the church or out of the church, acknowledging openly the lordship of Jesus or knowing nothing of such acknowledgment and lordship, the obligation is one and invariable in its abiding and eternal aspects. And it is nothing less than this for one and all, *to live life to the utmost, and to do only those things which make for the enlargement and enrichment of life.* Get this rule once firmly fixed in your faith and you will find it a compass indeed, more to be depended upon than any excusing judgments of what seems right or wrong in the imperfect light of to-day, or what may be the measure of our sway, as compared with that of others, over the lives and destinies of our fellow-men. The best man’s conscience is his, only to be made better every day. The poorest man’s influence is immeasurably beyond his own estimate of it as it stands, and an illimitable increase of it lies every hour within his reach. There is one law for all, the

law of perfect living, and that one law holds within it possibilities of one eternal destiny which only the mind that can measure God himself is able to determine.

CHAPTER VI

“AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?”

IF life were mainly a matter of acquiring a right theory and then of carrying it out in an orderly, logical way, the pathway of pleasure, as we have traced it, would now seem to be plain enough. We would need only to recognize the seriousness of laughter, the consent of Jesus to a wholesome sort of fun, the large function of natural play as a part of the building process of life, and the equal and invariable obligation of all to make amusement, as well as the more laborious employments of life, contribute to the real purpose for which we are here,—the perfecting of ourselves and of others. Having done this, we might measure out our laughter as a man calculates the yield of his corn-fields, or bids on the contract for the building of a house.

The suggestion is more amusing than our amusements themselves would be likely to prove if we went at them in this wooden way. Life is a good deal more than logic, and laughter is the most spontaneous side of life. Moreover, our amusements reflect our environment much more than

they embody our reflections. Logic has about as much to do with laughter as deliberate intention has to do with the beating of the heart. Nevertheless, the heart may be kept healthy enough to go on with its labor more effectively, if not less unconsciously, by taking thought for one's life after a right fashion. And there is a taking thought for one's laughter which is wholly consistent with the spontaneity of fun, by which laughter is likely to last longer and to circulate with more freedom and power.

“Out of the heart are the issues of life,” is as true as when it was first written down centuries ago. The emphasis of the inner, individual life is valid for all time. But we know, better than our fathers knew, the relation of the heart to the other organs of the body. And we feel, more than our fathers felt, the dependence of the individual upon the environment in the midst of which he lives. No intelligent man can think of his amusements now without taking into account the order of the world about him, which increasingly shapes his own life, whether he works or plays. If we are going to laugh unto God to-day we shall have to reckon on a great deal more than our own will in the matter.

Laughter has always been a *social* habit. It is not normal for a man to laugh alone. Solitary laughter is, generally speaking, the laughter of the insane,—more terrible than tears. Men almost

invariably get together when they want amusement. Etymologically, amusement is the opposite of musing. Men muse alone, but commonly they are amused only when they get together. And it is the character of their getting together, much more than the manner of their private musing, that fixes the forms and gives direction to the influence of their play.

The thing that is most influential with respect to popular amusements to-day is not that we have thought out the logic of laughter more clearly than our fathers did, or that we are more Christian in our individual thinking about it. It is the changed and changing character of our social contacts that has most to do with the fact that, on the whole, we are taking play more seriously, and are more inclined to conform it to Christian standards and ideals. Our circumstances are shaping our thoughts quite as much as our thoughts are shaping our circumstances.

To what extent the modification of the manner of the world's work has, within the last few hundred years, modified the manner of the world's play, very few people yet realize. The modern world is no more different from the world of the Middle Ages, with respect to letters or commerce, than it is with respect to play. The discovery of America has chiefly been thought of in the past as an *intellectual* achievement. It is now much more recognized as a *commercial* effect and cause. But

it has been hardly less revolutionary in relation to the pleasure life of the world than with regard to business. Our play life has not been less modified than have our profits or our philosophies by the adventurous voyage of Columbus four centuries ago.

Nor has the development of machinery within the last one hundred years had more to do with the making and the unmaking of fortunes than it has had to do with the making and the unmaking of fun. Our inventions would not astonish our fathers of the period of the Revolutionary War more than would many of our sports and pastimes, and especially the lighter moods of the modern man. There will be occasion later to speak of this more at length, but nothing is more unlike the life of two centuries ago in England than the changed attitude, among Christians and church-members particularly, toward a cheerful and optimistic conception of life. Some of the most devout expressions of old-time seriousness move us to irrepressible smiles to-day.

It is quite too much to claim that the change has been altogether good. This is very far from being the fact. Our attitude toward life is probably more healthful as a whole, and in the realm of religion there is very much less of the morbid and the unreal, but at many points progress has been at the cost of simplicity and disinterestedness. Nowhere is this change for

the worse more manifest than it is in the realm of sport.

The writer from whom we quoted a while ago, Joseph Lee, in the same article from which we took a sentence or two concerning the natural function of play, speaks more at length and very illuminatingly as to certain aspects of this contrast between the play life of our ancestors and our own, and also regarding some of the manifest causes which have seriously modified our inheritance of play. He says in part:

“The life led by our ancestors, which molded their customs and traditions in play as in all other respects, was for thousands of years a life in small village communities. . . . In this ancient tribal and village life, people lived near enough together to meet for purposes of defense, of government, and of recreation, and yet were not so crowded but that there was room for every sort of play and game.

“Under the conditions of our modern life, however, the introduction of machinery and other improvements into the art of agriculture has had the double effect of greatly enlarging our farms and thereby rendering our population far more sparse, and of making possible the enormous growth and crowding of our cities. The result has been the suffocation on the one hand, and the attenuation, almost to the point of disappearance, on the other, of much of our recreational and social life. You can play baseball with a base ninety feet long; you can play it fairly well with one of half that length; but you cannot play it

when the distance is less than three feet or more than a mile. And something the same is true of other games.

“Immigration, the other cause of danger to our recreational life, has hitherto had a curiously sterilizing effect. The immigrant has not brought his own games with him, and, except for baseball, crap-shooting, and marbles, seems to absorb very little of our American tradition.

“These three influences,—the crowding of the city, the loneliness of the country, and unlimited alien immigration,—have had a most serious effect upon all our institutions; but nowhere is this effect more clearly shown than in the loss or lessened vogue of many of our ancient games. Never before, probably, has a nation been threatened with a loss of its play tradition. And such a loss would be almost an irreparable one. . . . It would be almost as serious as the loss of the tradition of oral speech or of the great legal and constitutional methods which the ages have gradually evolved. For life can no more go on without play than it can without language or without laws.”

The three factors here named meet us on the very threshold of any far-seeing consideration of the social aspects of the problem of play. The changed conditions of agriculture, the growth of great cities, and the intermixture of a multitude of strange peoples,—these have had more to do, and are more influential to-day, in determining the character of our amusements and the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of our laughter

than any amount of reasoning concerning the seriousness of sport, or the teachings of moral philosophy as to its primary purpose. We actually do play, not as we think we ought to play, not as we think Jesus would have played, not as nature indicates we were made to play, and not out of a sense of a definite, common, moral intention; but we play as our playmates play, as our neighbors and friends play, as the age in which we live gives us the chance and the choice of play. And neither chance nor choice is for most of us what it ought to be to-day.

It is said on the authority of one who has specialized on the folklore of play that up to the middle of the last century we had a richer play tradition than any other country, owing apparently to the fact that for two centuries we had been more out of the current of contemporary events than other countries, and so had remained more primitive and unsophisticated. The America of that time was, in some ways, a piece of the England of Elizabeth, isolated and preserved as such.

Up to the time of which we have spoken, the games played by American children were apparently much the same all over the country, going back as they did to a common origin in England before the streams of our early immigration separated. And the play tradition was as strong in Puritan New England as in the South or in the

Middle States. In its origin, this play tradition was much older than England. It was European rather than English, and undoubtedly went back beyond that to the play of ancestors yet farther removed.

The game, "Oats, pease, beans, and barley grow," is said to have been played by Froissart and Rabelais, and is still a favorite in France, including Provence, as well as in Spain, Italy, Sicily, Germany, and Sweden. "Hop Scotch" has no such local origin as its name appears to imply, but seems to be a nearly universal game, its range being from England to Hindustan. In Austria the final goal in this game was called the "temple;" in Italy the last three divisions are the *inferno*, *purgatorio*, and *paradiso*. "Jackstones" is said to be of Japanese origin, but seems to have circled the earth, as America received the game from both East and West.

Much more might be given, as recited by this writer (Newell) or by Lee and others after them, concerning the notable antiquity of many of our simplest and most familiar sports. "Horace tells how, on the famous journey to Brundisium, Mæcenas went out and played tennis while he and Vergil were kept in the house, one by a weak stomach and the other by weak eyes. Aristotle recommends 'the rattle of Archimedes' for children of about the age of six. Dolls are found in the catacombs of Egypt, and ball-games go back

at least as far as Nausicaa and Atalanta. (The latter, to be sure, on the occasion most generally remembered, was not engaged in ball, but in track athletics; but the fact that she stopped in the middle of an important sprint to chase after a ball, is more significant than if she had brought in the winning run for Thebes.) The Roman girls used to play ball, and children's balls were made with a rattle inside, and with gaudily colored lobes, as they are to-day. Ball seems to have been especially a game for girls during the Middle Ages, and is mentioned as such by Walter von der Vogelweide.”

Many sports were of ancient religious origin. “London Bridge,” which we know only as an old-fashioned child's game, is supposed to have represented long ago the perpetual warfare of good and bad spirits over departed souls. “The special relation between bridges and the enemy of mankind long antedates ‘bridge whist.’ There are ‘Devil's Bridges’ in all parts of Europe. The devil in those traditions represents the ancient spirit of the land, who resented the presumption of man in making safe roads across his streams to rob him of his natural toll of deaths by drowning, and sought revenge. In consequence, he always did his best to destroy the bridge, and very frequently succeeded. In order to make it stand firm and sure, he had to be propitiated, and there are many stories of compacts

between the architect and his infernal majesty, under which the latter was entitled to the soul of the first person passing over the bridge,—though he was generally cheated out of it by various infantile devices which he never seemed able to anticipate. That is why London Bridge is forever falling down, why the children who cross it are continually being caught, and why the game finally ends in the tug of war (between good and evil spirits) to settle their ultimate destination.”

These things are of more than curious or idle interest. They indicate the manner of life out of which came most of our simpler and older forms of merrymaking. Much that belonged to that life in the way of fear-inspiring and whimsical religious ideas has happily passed away. But there was much also of intimate and homelike neighborhood life which we have left behind to our loss, and for which the present age has substituted conditions and types of play that are far less favorable to amusement of a healthful kind. The May-poles of old England, which our Puritan fathers frowned down, were innocent indeed as compared with much of the hectic sensationalism of our modern “white cities” and brilliantly illuminated “pleasure” resorts.

To recognize these facts is not to maintain for a moment that the personal ideal of a pure and purposeful pleasure life is vain. But the ideal is

first. Well does Mrs. Browning say, apropos of work:

“We must be here to work, and men who work
Can only work for men; and not to work in vain
Must understand humanity, and so work humanly,
And raise men’s bodies still by raising souls,
As God did first.”

So also with respect to play is the ideal, as it stands in this argument, first. There is nothing to be said concerning the importance of environment, either in relation to work or to play, which does not call for a first insistence upon right thinking and right willing in the individual life. We shall raise the “bodies” of our amusements “still by raising souls;” that is, whatever forms the pleasure life of the new order may take, the redemption of our pleasures outwardly must come through the transformation of inward purpose, through fellowship with the divine in our thinking and feeling.

But though we have touched the social side of the question only incidentally, it must be evident at once that we are not going to save our amusements merely by trying to save ourselves. Play is much more than a personal matter. It has become, in this generation, much more than a neighborhood matter. Over against the fact that life is one, stands this other fact,—that the world is one to-day as it has never been before. Our industrial problem is largely a world problem,

and it is the breaking down of the barriers between the world's workers that constitutes the most serious aspect of the problem to-day. There is revolution in it, revolution more serious, though, as we hope, far less sanguinary, than have been some of the revolutions of modern times. And there is revolution also in the breaking down of the barriers between those who play, and in the passing of those conditions which have hitherto given form to the play life of the world. If there were nothing more serious in the situation than the items already cited, these things should be enough to "give us pause." The old-fashioned country neighborhood is passing, or has passed. The masses are caught in the terrific turmoil of our great cities. People who were born to different languages, who represent different racial experiences, and who champion more or less conflicting religious convictions are brought together from all the ends of the earth. And these often find it more difficult to play together than they do to work together.

These things are merely the surface of the problem, as will shortly be seen; but to see even these superficial facts is to realize that we must measure our amusements by something more than monastic ideals of separation and abstinence, personal proprieties, or the rules and respectabilities of our own particular group. We must prepare ourselves to recognize as frankly the question,

“Who is my neighbor?” as we have faced frankly the other inquiry, “Who’s who before the moral law?”

If we were simply destroying one another’s play by the new world which we are making, the matter would be serious enough, as the writer from whom we have so freely quoted has said. To cease playing altogether would be a calamity for the race that no words can exaggerate. But we are in no danger of this. The play instinct is too universal and too irrepressible to be extinguished by any or all of the devices of modern life. The danger is not of extinction; it is of an inferior and mischievous substitution. There are forces at work, not yet touched upon, that tend to create ideas and appetites with regard to amusement more harmful than the worst of the superstitions out of which came the old games and gambolings. Our modern heathenism shows itself at its worst at the point where it seeks to control the world’s laughter and conform it to its own hard and yellow image.

Every thoughtful father and mother to-day must face with seriousness the question as to the kind of children with whom their own children should play. The common school makes for a democracy of fellowship which, allowing to the full for all that can be said for it, is fraught with no small amount of danger. Our children are no longer our own, but they belong to the world. Parents

with whom we cannot talk, because they know hardly a word of our native tongue, and with whom we would hardly know how to talk if the barrier of unintelligible accents, which lies like a great gulf between us, were bridged by some practicable world language, because we have so little in common with their associations and ideas, are nevertheless both progenitors and educators, in large part, of the plastic lives of children whose shaping is going to affect more or less the lives of our own boys and girls. Other lands are furnishing the other half of the parentage of our grandchildren. Those who have prattled upon our breasts will hear their own little ones prattle upon breasts that have been nurtured on the milk of civilizations wholly foreign to our own. The very rag-time in which we sing, "Stay in your own back-yard," is its own token to us, if we are able to read between the lines, as to how impossible it is now to keep the world even that far removed from the door-steps where our children play. The fences are all going down, and back-yard and front-yard are all merged in one common street to-day.

The problem grows only more difficult when the youth has succeeded to the child. It is still possible to have a measure of isolation for the boy or girl, or, what is better far than isolation, a measure of safe and sound companionship, but the possibility becomes rapidly less as he grows. It is not

merely that the school claims him, and that there he finds his fellows from all the ends of the earth. More insistent than the school in its perilous disregard of the privacies which we have tried to hold fast, is the great city. It scorns all our sanctities, and derides all our decencies, if need be, for the sake of its factories, which must have “hands” at the price of almost any cost in souls. And more scornful of our anxieties and timidities than the shop, harder by far than the face of the most rigorous foreman beside the lathe where our lad goes to get his livelihood and his trade, is the pleasure world of the big town which reck nothing of what we have labored to teach the boy or the girl concerning the permissible and the non-permissible in play. However we may have guided the child’s laughter until this time, so that both he and ourselves might indeed laugh unto God, the pleasure life of our modern metropolis reaches for him with a vehemence and a viciousness that too often make his later laughter a fearful mockery of our wisdom and our prayers, and a just occasion for almost unrelievable tears.

This is the fact that stands forth against all our talk of fun to-day;—that, guard it as we will in order that the frolic of our own flesh and blood may be pure and abiding, our neighbors may have more to do with the outcome than ourselves. We cannot save our own babies to-day except as we save our neighbors’ babies. We may think to do

so by keeping them apart while they romp and play the ancient pastimes of our race as children. We may accomplish such separation even later when they find their place in the world's work. But the whole play life of the modern city is against us. The world of laughter is one neighborhood now, vastly more than the world of thought or the world of work. And only as this one neighborhood is dominated by the sense of one life worth living, one standard of pure purpose whether at work or at play, one moral philosophy that makes God first even in our fun, *only so will our own laughter be saved to a sure service of this ideal.*

It is in vain that we talk of amusements from the standpoint of ourselves alone. To try to treat amusements in a non-social way is as futile as to attempt to deal with them in a merely incidental way. They are as much more than individual as they are more than incidental. Our play is emphatically part of life itself, and it is part, not only of our own life, but of the life of the world. In industry we are beginning to see that a man's job is more than a way of getting a living; it is his life,—worthy work only as it is an expression of himself. So it is with play. Real play is an expression of the real man. But this is not all. We are seeing also that, so far as work is concerned, a man cannot keep his own job what it ought to be except as he keeps the other man's job what it

ought to be. To save his own labor he must save the toil of his fellows. He must protect them, must educate them,—in a word, he must save them if he would not be lost himself.

Is it any less so with respect to fun? Has this modern world made of our industries one work-bench even as much as it has made of our amusements one theater and one stage? Always the world has been playing common games, more than it has been doing common work. The work is one to-day, but the play is one to an even greater degree. And, because it is one, we can save it to the one common meaning and end of life for us all only as we address ourselves to save our neighbor with the same zeal with which we seek to save ourselves.

CHAPTER VII

THE EXPLOITATION OF FUN

THE man who "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho" twenty centuries ago "fell among thieves," who "stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

In Jesus' parable the tragic story of that roadway is passed with this one brief, illuminating reference. It is a lightning flash which shows in an instant a whole landscape with startling vividness. The story deals in the same illuminating way with the incidents of the man's deliverance. The priest and the Levite are both flashed upon the canvas of history as swiftly and inexorably as the entomologist impales an insect upon his screen. Over against the exhibit of their unconcern and incapacity is set in suggestive relief the fine figure of the unnamed Samaritan, who is, to all time, a token of what real neighborliness means, and of the unexpected places in which it may often be found.

The story is marvelously well adapted to illustrate the world of amusement as we find it to-day. There is no need to insist upon the analogy in detail; the main outlines of the comparison are

so obvious that they do not have to be forced. One need not go very far in his observation of the many highways of modern pleasure life to find the man who has been robbed. He is to be found altogether too easily, stripped of his raiment, wounded, and half-dead. Indeed, this is a mild description of the disaster which has fallen upon a multitude of the brightest and best in our time, on the swift descent into the world of "fun."

Nor do the priest and the Levite fare very much better when the comparison is continued. When not indifferent to the sore straits of those who have been unspeakably despoiled, their incapacity to-day even more than of old is a scandal to religion. Looking at the matter in a large way, and with earnest endeavor not to be more severe than Jesus was, the candid commentator on the present situation is compelled to admit that so far our religious forces have not been very effective either in staying the exploitation, or in relieving those who have been exploited. It is to be feared that the Samaritan, that is, the man of the world, is often more effective in bringing succor and redress than many a man whose religious spirit is good, but who, by reason either of inertia, or of inaptness of thought, goes by ineffectively "on the other side."

How common the robbery is we know in a general way, but we are far from having faced the facts with unaverted vision, or having traced

the condition to its cause. An incidental and superficial treatment of the matter is the most that the majority of us attempt. It is "human nature," we say. And there is a good deal to justify this very common and very inconclusive observation on the case. That men rob one another on the fields of fun seems to be but a part of the whole story of "man's inhumanity to man."

There is a familiar story of one who afterward became famous that when as a child he walked forth in his first pair of trousers, his pocket was full of new pennies which fond relatives had given him. Meeting on the street an older lad who was sporting with a new whistle, the little fellow coveted the whistle so ardently that he pulled out all his pennies, and offered them forthwith in exchange. The older boy promptly accepted the offer, and the small boy walked off with his prize, only to discover a little later that he had paid its price several times over. In his case there was this much of compensation: he was able in later years to philosophize upon the incident for the benefit of men who in much more serious ways were inclined to "pay too dear for their whistles."

In this instance the older boy did what most boys and most men are quite too willing to do; that is, he took advantage of the ignorance and inexperience of his fellow. This is what men are doing every day in business, in spite of all our

moralizing about the advantages of honesty as the best policy, and a good deal of plain preaching about the "false balance" as still "an abomination to the Lord."

The pity is that a great many of us who think ourselves observant, and who unquestionably are humane and moral in our intentions, do not see that there is anything more than this to the problem of exploitation to-day. We are wholly satisfied with the appeal to individual piety, or at the most with a corrective course of purely individual discipline. That men wrong each other, both in the selling of goods and in the catering to the appetite for pleasure, is a fact which we of course note, for it is a fact which all of us are bound to see. But we blame the wrong either upon the individual cupidity of the man who does the injury, or upon the individual false judgment of the one to whom the injury is done. What we do not see is this:—that, in making the world over into one neighborhood, in these last one hundred years especially, we have created conditions of temptation and of exploitation of one another, both with respect to business and with respect to pleasure, which call for a new understanding, and for measures of mutual consideration and protection large enough to meet our enlarged hazards and needs.

Take the manufacture and sale of lager beer as a specific instance. A prominent magazine writer,

in a recent issue of one of the best known American magazines, goes into a detailed study of this comparatively modern drink. Its discovery and first manufacture were hardly more than a household incident. Of recent years lager beer has been "capitalized" to such an extent that the matter of securing returns upon the stock of the "beer barons,"—a very appropriate term, by the way,—is now practically impossible except as beer is artificially manipulated in price and the consumption of the adulterated article is artificially stimulated.

The twin evils which in our time have greatly multiplied the natural and ineradicable mischievousness of the liquor traffic are, admittedly, the adulteration of the liquors themselves, and the "treating" habit. Both of these are inevitable consequences of the over-capitalization of the business. The article must continually be made cheaper, and the demand for it must be unnaturally advanced, in order to keep pace with the call for returns upon larger and larger proportions of "watered" stock. The "beer barons" can retain their baronies only as they make the retailers more and more their "retainers" and servitors, and as they are allowed by the public to use all manner of devices in cheapening the quality of their product and pushing the use of it by mischievous stimulation of the most dangerous and destructive sort.

But lest we lay the blame too exclusively upon

the liquor traffic, let us inquire whether this reasoning and practice have any relation to other kinds of business, and in particular to the business of supplying the people with recreation, amusement, and fun. It will be found that very much the same situation has developed here, and that Christian men are unwillingly, if not unwittingly, involved in it.

Here is a man,—a Christian man,—who is manager of a great street railway. He is always in his place at church on Sunday, and is the capable teacher of a large Bible class in the Sunday-school. He is conservative as to his theology, simple and sincerely devout as to his personal life, and a man of careful, exemplary habits, not only on Sunday but on every day of the week. Yet his railway offers every sort of sensational inducement to get the Sunday crowds for Sunday baseball, Sunday theaters, Sunday picnics, and Sunday sports of a still more questionable kind. The man himself takes no direct part in this advertising except to see that it is thoroughly and systematically done. Were he to refuse this much of participation, profits would fall off, and his official head would speedily follow. The efficiency of his railroad management depends in a degree upon his catering to a purely commercial estimate of productive fun. The stockholders and trustees are interested in the amusements of the hundreds of thousands to whom they minister on Sunday, chiefly as they can

make money out of that ministry of so-called recreation and delight. Doubtless they would prefer to have it real recreation and pure delight, and some of them may be far-sighted enough to see that, even from the standpoint of lasting profits, a people who have been well served in their amusements are a better asset than a people who have been plundered and betrayed. But commonly there is no such far-sighted reckoning. It is a matter of getting immediate returns in the most liberal measure. The present cash value of fun is the first consideration. And to this end the worst kind of merrymaking may be the most productive fun.

The fact is, the railway is under the same sort of economic pressure as the saloon, and the result is very much the same. There is, on the one hand, a constant tendency toward a cheapening of the service either at the expense of the product or of the producer, and there is, on the other hand, a like inevitable tendency toward an over-stimulation of trade at the cost oftentimes of public health and public morals. Our concern here with both of these instances is that in the first place they are directly and very influentially involved in the pleasure problem of our time, and, in the second place, they illustrate, in a way not to be misunderstood by any one who is willing to understand, the most serious aspect of the social side of amusements to-day.

There will be some who will fall back instantly upon the old Scripture, "The love of money is the root of all evil," or, more exactly and not quite so inclusively, "a root of all kinds of evil." But quote the text either way and you are still far from having analyzed the peculiar situation of our time.

No one can prove for a moment that the love of money is naturally any stronger to-day than it has been ever since man came to know its use and power. To maintain this, is tacitly to admit the failure of two thousand years of Christian teaching and example. But there is no denying the fact that the opportunities for money-making are vastly greater in our own age, and throughout Christendom especially, than they have ever before been in the history of the world. Why "throughout Christendom especially"? Is not this the explanation?—that the quickening of man's faculties, which has come through Christianity, has also inevitably quickened his temptations? Christianity has stimulated men to a commercial development that puts Christian principle to a severer strain. And if, on the point of money greed, the so-called Christian world sometimes appears to compare ill with the ancient pagan world or the world of heathenism to-day, those who make the comparison too often fail to take into account the fact that it is within the bounds of Christendom that the prizes of the profit-seekers have grown to such enormous proportions within

the period of something like the last one hundred years.

Nor is the love of pleasure stronger to-day than it was of old. The opportunities for the pleasure-seeker, however, are vastly increased, and the opportunity, especially of the man who seeks to make money out of the pleasure-seeking of others, is immeasurably greater than it has ever been. Christendom again is the field of a more varied and attractive amusement life than was ever dreamed of by the ancient world. And every department of that life is capitalized for every cent of dividend that it will carry. And at every point where pleasure touches on profit-making, the tendency is to cheapen the quality of the pleasure supplied, and to stimulate by the most dubious and dangerous devices an excited and abnormal demand for it.

There are those, both Christian and non-Christian, who will object to the suggestion that Christianity is in any way responsible for what they regard as a purely economic situation. The invention of the high-power machinery of our age, and the development of commercial conveniences and commercial concentration, together with the opportunity which democracy has given for the keener competition of a multitude whose abilities have hitherto been suppressed, seem to such reasoners a sufficient explanation of the transformation of the modern world which we have seen;

or, if any further items are needed to complete the count, they are to be found in the field of economics alone. It is not fair to consider religion responsible for what seems to them such an *irreligious*, or at least such an *unreligious*, effect.

Whatever the explanation, the fact is plain, and the fact itself is of chief importance here. Christendom to-day offers greater inducement to money-making than the paganism of yesterday offered, or the heathenism of to-day can offer. Likewise Christendom laughs more abundantly, and offers a far more abundant financial reward to those who promote laughter, than the world outside of Christendom of either the present or the past. No religion preaches more powerfully against the love of money than does Christianity; none makes so much of self-sacrifice for the sake of others as against a selfish seeking of one's own pleasure. Yet nowhere is money-making so attractive as within the Christian world, and nowhere is pleasure so systematically exploited in the interest of gain.

Why should we be either surprised or disturbed that this is so? Or why should we try to explain the facts in the case,—when we do not wilfully or carelessly ignore them,—by rushing to the pessimistic conclusion that, in spite of the goodness and the larger revelations of God, man persistently and without cause waxes worse and worse?

No man is surprised or discomfited to discover

that, as he climbs a mountain, the atmosphere becomes more rare and breathing gets somewhat more difficult the higher he goes. No workman complains because he has to be more careful and painstaking as he passes from the rough labor with which he began to the detail of the precise finishing processes. No intelligent father and mother will deny that, great as are the problems of dealing with the infant child, there is need of greater acumen to deal with the more subtle problems of youth. On every hand the price of achievement is that the good we do calls continually for a more exacting and difficult good. Progress, in every school, creates problems vastly more intricate and formidable than those which we have left behind. We get our victories only that we may fight more arduous and more energizing combats.

Be this as it may, and whatever we conclude concerning the relation of our religious training and tradition to the marvelous world-transformation which recent decades have seen, there is no room to doubt, much less to deny, the weighty bearing of the economic factor throughout the realms both of business and of fun. Ours is a money-making age, and all our preaching against the love of money is largely effort thrown away, if we do not face the facts and try to adjust our economics in the interest of Christian motives and ideals. Ours is also a pleasure-seeking age, both

because the opportunities for getting pleasure are vastly more extensive and attractive, and because the rewards for supplying pleasure are more gainful, than ever in the past. And the last fact is perhaps the largest fact that we have to face as regards the whole amusement problem of our day.

The trail of the money-maker lies everywhere across the paths of pleasure. Here also, as in the world of manufacture and barter of goods, invention has been busy, and the concentration of capital has steadily and most seriously increased. The popular sports, under our present economic order, are capitalized and monopolized quite as naturally and inevitably as are the best known brands of machinery, or wearing apparel and food. The brothels and the saloons, which cater to the baser appetites of men, are found to be systematized by a powerful few, who use them to the limit of their ingenuity and financial ability to exploit their victims. Adulteration and excitation go hand in hand.

It is not less so within the limits of opportunity with regard to the simpler, finer, and more legitimate pleasures. These also are capitalized so as to carry as much as they can be made to carry of watered stock. They are mischievously manipulated both as to quality and quantity, that they may be made profitable, not naturally and healthfully for those who use them, but artificially and exorbitantly, to fatten fortunes which in many

instances are already unhealthfully large, or to gratify the unscrupulous greed of those who covet such fortunes. The debasement of fun is easy enough and serious enough when there is no organized effort to debase it on the part of men who can see huge profits in exploiting the pleasures of their neighbors. Laughter lends itself readily to thoughtlessness and excess. How much greater, then, is the menace of amusements deliberately debased with all the ingenuity that modern business enterprise can command! And how will it fare with our individual ideals of purity and of purpose in play, if we do not meet the organized and subsidized exploitation of fun with clear vision as to how much more than a personal issue the question of our merrymaking has become, and with some effective concert of action along social lines?

CHAPTER VIII

LEGISLATION AND LAUGHTER

THERE is no adage of our time which is more overworked by the moral obstructionists and social reactionaries than the saying that you cannot make a man good by act of legislature. The saying has not even the authority of a great name behind it, yet it is as much in vogue in certain circles as if it had been of the very substance of literature since Shakespere shaped his dramas, or Chaucer gave us his *Canterbury Tales*.

The saying, as used by those who are impatient at the interference of law with the profits which they are making at the expense of society, is very seldom sincere. It partakes of the character of many an ancient protest which the Scriptures recite. It is the cry of the unclean spirits again, "What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Nazarene? Art thou come to destroy us?" Or it is the angry clamor of very human spirits whose idols are about to be overthrown, led by some Demetrius who is very much aware of the fact "that by this business we have our wealth." It is the man who, under cover of law, is debauching his fellows for gain, that is generally at the front when it is proposed to remove from him the pro-

tection of the law and give that protection to his victims.

Nowhere is this very dubious protest more in evidence than it is at the point of the pleasure life of our day. The liquor men again are first and foremost here. There is much deprecation of "sumptuary laws" as ineffective, and contrary to the interests of character by those who have very little character of their own and are entirely willing to ruin the character of others for a reward. Much is made of "temperance" as against prohibition, on the ground that what men and women need is not to be exempt from temptation but to develop the strength to overcome temptation. At this point there are some who are not directly interested on the side of the exploitation of pleasure who are in danger of being deceived.

The fallacy of this whole philosophy of disingenuous desire for a larger freedom for men is easily proved when the natural bearings of the argument are taken into account. This much-talked-of "liberty" may mean the opportunity of men to dope and drug their fellows with drink or other man-destroying poisons. Or it may be the defense of an unnecessary and soul-stultifying poverty. Or, as is often the case, it may be the plea of the pleasure-makers who are unmaking their fellows for the sake of getting quick dividends on over-capitalized fun. In any case the objection to protective legislation as tending to

weaken character is utterly disproved by all the analogies of the natural world when fairly interpreted, and much more by a right understanding of the genesis and genius of our civilization.

We do not build fences around trees in public places to make them grow, and no one imagines for a minute that such is the object for which they are there. But, because the place is public, and because of unusual conditions of exposure, the protecting fence is found effective in our parks and on our streets. The trees grow all the better if horses are prevented from gnawing away the bark, and small boys from breaking down the branches.

The owner of a large mountain ranch in California, which was generally given over to natural vegetation, desired to raise some garden stuff near the house. The mountain quail were so abundant and so destructive that he was compelled to cover the growing lettuce and like produce of his garden with wire netting. Many a man passed by and noted the wire screen, and at once understood its purpose. There were "wets" as well as "drys" among his friends, but none of them ventured to suggest to him that he could not make lettuce grow by wiring it in. Yet, at the same time, they were using a similar argument against proposals to protect the growing youth of the community from something a thousandfold more mischievous than quail.

It is sometimes assumed by the exponents of

evolution that the law of life, where man does not change it, is "the survival of the fittest." By this is generally meant the strong. "Nature, red in tooth and claw," lets men struggle for existence, and thereby only the hardy and the worthy survive. Some would have it that, with respect to social conditions, whether they concern work or play, the same rule ought to prevail, and that life would be the better for having to prove itself out in this way.

But this is a very one-sided and quite obsolete interpretation of "natural selection." Granted that the method of creation is by development from the lower to the higher, and that weakness and unworthiness tend, in the actual contest of life, to eliminate themselves, it is still true that the protective ministry of love has had its part in the upward course of things. It is a mistake to speak as if the unsocial qualities have been the most productive of progress. Quite the contrary is the truth. The longer infancy of man, with the consequent need of greater protection for the human child than is accorded the lower animals, is now recognized as one of the chief factors, on the physical side, of man's superiority over the creatures of the wild. And even among the lower animals, those which have most availed themselves of the protective arm of man are precisely those which have survived as against the wilder and fiercer forms of life.

Law is indeed unavailing to develop character if a man resists it ;—as unavailing as are the bars which shut the tiger in but leave his native fierceness untamed. However, it is those creatures which have submitted to prohibitions, not those which have raged and chafed against them, that have remained and improved, while the more “independent” sort have perished, or exist only as solitary specimens in an unhappy captivity.

Now herein is the very heart of civilization. Since man became man he has made progress only as he has submitted to the limitation of his individual whim and caprice for the sake of the social good. All growth in government means the prevalence of the common welfare over the mere impulses of the individual and the mob. Those societies which have submitted most intelligently to the guiding hand of law, have far outstripped the savage races which still maintain their original independence of restraint. When Rudyard Kipling says,

“The 'eathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone,
'E don't obey no orders except they is his own,”

he is marking, consciously or unconsciously, the dividing-line between the man who is civilized and the man who is not. The civilized man knows how to make and accept prohibitions. The uncivilized man is against any interference with his immediate desires.

There went the round of the newspapers a while ago a humorous story which emphasized in a popular way the same fundamental fact:—that progress proceeds from the law of social consideration and not from a license to do as you please.

It was the Fourth of July. A drunken man staggered out of a saloon and began hailing everybody in sight in a very noisy way. He was apparently very much impressed in his own mind with the fact that it was Independence Day, but he had a very common misunderstanding of what independence means.

“Ah, there,” he said to an Irishman against whom he jostled, “I want you to understand that this is a free country, and that I am a free man. Yes, sir, this is a free country, and it’s liberty that every man has here. Liberty! liberty! Do you hear?”

He swung his fists around recklessly as he spoke, and unfortunately hit the Irishman on the nose. The Irishman at once knocked the man down, and began to pummel him vigorously. At length when he had cried, “Enough,” the Irishman let him up slowly, with this sage advice:

“This is a frree counthry all right, me friend, and it’s lots of liberty folks do be havin’ here. But I wants ye to understand that your liberty inds where me nose begins!”

It is exactly this lesson which a multitude of people need to learn;—that the liberty of one

man ends where the rights of another man begin. And the purpose of the law is to teach men this lesson, by word of legislation if possible, and by force if need be.

It would be just as sensible to say that one cannot make people *well* by law as it is to say that one cannot make men *good* by law. The fact is, that we *are* making men well by law, or at least we are preventing other people from making them sick, and in many instances preventing people from destroying themselves. Havana was made sanitary by law, with the consequence that hundreds of lives were saved, and the world was given an illustration of the importance of wise legislation in relation to health. The Panama Canal Zone was as notable a triumph of the enforcement of prohibition as it was a mighty engineering achievement which would have failed of accomplishment if there had not been some effective regulation beforehand. A single American city is said to have reduced the infant mortality rate by more than fifty per cent. through the prohibition of an unhealthful milk supply, and the legal regulation of the business of those who sold that very important article of food.

The fear of those who make this argument,—that morality is not to be had by act of legislature,—is not that preventive legislation will fail to accomplish the improvement of society, but that it *will succeed*. They may argue, as do cer-

tain types of newspapers which cater to the love of sensation and to the appeal of the spectacular,—both fundamental factors in the amusement problem,—that they are only giving the people what they want, but they know well enough that the feeding of a bad appetite is a most effective way of promoting its growth. On the other hand, the removal of incitement often means the speedy elimination of the thing itself. There is a profound wisdom in those phrases of the Lord's Prayer which deal with moral deliverance, much as they have puzzled certain commentators. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," or "from the evil one." No part of this great prayer is more emphatically social than are these words. It is the business of society to remove temptations from the way of the weak, the uninstructed, and the overburdened, and to see to it that every "evil one" who seeks to trap men to their destruction is made ineffective for mischief and is speedily put out of the way.

That we are recognizing this obligation more and more is evident on every hand, in spite of all the fallacious objections which are made. The saying of the great English statesman, William Ewart Gladstone, that government ought to make it "as easy as possible to do right, and as hard as possible to do wrong," while very far from having the practical acceptance which it ought to have, is nevertheless a sentiment that is increasingly

influential in public address and in the shaping of the modern state.

Two men were passing along the street not very far from a public school in one of our western cities. They were practically strangers to each other, and it is doubtful whether either knew the other's name. In a vacant lot on the right, which was evidently private property, there was an open ditch, probably five feet deep and about four feet across. Both of them commented instantly on the dangerous character of the excavation, and one of them recited two or three instances of recent occurrence which emphasized this danger. The other man expressed the opinion that such an open menace to the children of the neighboring school was contrary to the law. To this the first speaker objected, on the ground that it was "private property," as though that point precluded all interference. Private property apparently loomed very large in his thought.

But the principle may be held to be now fairly established, that no property is private when it is held against the public good. The right of "eminent domain," by which governments, either local or general, may take possession of private holdings for public service, has long been recognized. The extent of the social sovereignty is being enlarged every day. Even the sign-board man is slowly yielding to the very intangible, but none the less very important, property-holding of the public in

scenic beauty, and the day is not far distant when no man will be allowed to annoy the eyes of the public with advertising devices on house or barn or field,—however much he may hold legal title in these material things,—to the detriment of the intellectual and esthetic enjoyments of his fellows.

With respect to public safety, the limitation of private liberty grows more marked every year. "Safety first" is a slogan which has to do with much more than the intrusion of pedestrians upon railway tracks, or with public carelessness in the use of this or that kind of corporation service. The corporations have beyond question a right to emphasize the safeguarding of the public against the public's own negligence. But if individuals are to consider safety first as against their reckless haste and their diverting interests, the law is bound to insist that the corporations themselves shall emphasize a safe and comfortable and wholly efficient service, rather than seek swollen dividends on watered stock upon which future generations are expected to pay increasing returns. In the realm of railway service and other corporate business enterprise, we have come to see very clearly of late that the *individual* approach to the problem is not enough; that society is bound to protect the individual against the man, or group of men, who, to make profits increase, would sacrifice him in life and limb.

In very moderate measure we have recognized

the same right and obligation to safeguard by law those who are endangered in the field of fun. To a mischievous extent, the business of amusing the people has been and is yet carried on with altogether too much freedom from sound social restraint. We have ignored in great degree the tremendous growth of capitalization with respect to the people's pleasures, and have trusted too exclusively to individual moral exhortation or the slow development of a modifying public sentiment. We have preached to young people against the dance, the theater, and the card party, while we have allowed to go practically unrebuked the men and women who have organized to make all questionable amusements more profitable to themselves by making them more seductively irresistible to the young. In other words, we have been meeting the most highly organized and the most efficiently directed armies of vice the world has ever seen, equipped with the most costly and destructive artillery which modern capital can secure, with the individual flint-lock and short sword of our ancestors. The present European war has shown that even the tactics of a Napoleon are out of date since the single battle front of Austerlitz and Jena; while Waterloo has been superseded by the well-nigh inconceivable reach of a modern battle-line along hundreds of miles of contending armies.

So also has the battle-front of the world of

amusement changed. It is no longer a question only of the individual "woman that was a sinner," standing with downcast eyes before the Master and exhorted by him to "go and sin no more." The same compassion, indeed, is at the heart of all uplift work to-day, and the rebuke of Jesus to the Pharisees who brought such a woman to him, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," is as piercingly pertinent as it was of old. But the profits of the traffic have grown, and the woman to-day is the victim of an organized onslaught, to overthrow which will require the full strength of the law-making forces of society. We have not ceased preaching to the woman, and we have greater need to exhibit the spirit of Jesus toward her than our respectable timidity likes to admit. But we are awaking to the fact that there is a place for law as well as for love in this program. Through whatever private property this ditch of iniquity may run, we are bound to see that it is closed. We may not longer be content with chiding those who stumble into it for their costly carelessness, nor even with the more pitying mood of drawing them out of the ditch and wiping the filth away with loving hands. It is our business to act together to the end that, so far as possible, this temptation may be removed from the pathway of all our kind.

It is just as much our business to have regard to the *legal overthrow* of every form of pleasure life

which makes for the undoing of our fellows. The injunction to "look not on the wine when it is red" gains greater force if society refuses to look upon the making and the selling of that which, at the last, both socially and individually, "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." We ought not to allow any man to profit himself by working unprofitableness to his neighbor. And if it is peculiarly the business of society to see to it that the physical menace is removed from the neighborhood of the public school, and that the high-ways which are frequented by the children are doubly secure against dangerous devices, it is even more incumbent upon the community to see to it that pitfalls, more enticing to the young, and more ruinous by far to those who fall into them, are not kept open and made deliberately attractive to unwary feet.

There were in the days of our fathers men who made a business of shipwrecking, putting forth false lights to draw men to disaster and death. The richer the traffic, the greater was the incentive to this nefarious trade. Sailors were warned against these wreckers, and there is no doubt that many were saved in this way. Others there were, doubtless, who might have been saved if they had been more heedful of these warnings, or less recklessly bent upon following their own way. But relief came when the public mood awakened to the need of drastic legislation against these

pirates along English and other European coasts, and the wreckers were summarily suppressed. Likewise our American fathers dealt with the pirates of Tripoli, whom the European nations had allowed to go practically unchecked. It is no longer left to the individual ship or to the individual sailor to guard against those who would destroy them for gain, but all nations are banded together to keep piracy from all the seas.

The pirates, however, who, in our great cities, go out in search of the pleasure craft of our youth, and who organize to make their expeditions more powerful and their devices more successfully destructive, are as yet but slightly limited in their evil work. We are still so much under the influence of the "*laissez faire*" doctrine in business, which is merely modern French for the ancient diabolism, "Let us alone," that we are more careful of the rights of the destroyers than we are of the rights of the destroyed.

There is a story of a young woman whose father was protesting with her against what he deemed a dangerous course. "I have had experience, daughter," he said seriously, to which the girl flippantly and ignorantly replied, "But, papa, I want to have experience, too." It is the claim of some that experience is the best guide, and that only so do people really learn anything. These profess to believe that evil will correct itself, if given freedom to work itself out, and

therefore they would have recourse to law only as a last resort.

But experience is social as well as individual. It ought not to be necessary for the race to repeat an experience in every individual, any more than for the individual to fall into the same ditch to-day out of which he was plucked in unhappy condition yesterday. And as to the contention that evil needs only to be let alone in order to correct itself, this teaching is a dangerous exaggeration and perversion of the great truth that sin bears in itself the root of its own ruin. The ancient oracle recognized the inherent weakness of wickedness in the familiar saying, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." But there is wisdom as well as wit back of the clever comment of the evangelist, Sam Jones, on the above text, "I notice that they make a whole lot better time when the righteous are after them."

In spite of this "let alone" doctrine, it is a long time since men have had a free hand in counterfeiting or otherwise corrupting the monetary standard. We do not throw upon the individual the risk of detecting, or failing to detect, whether the money which he handles is good or bad. If we did, we might all be more expert in handling currency, but our knowledge would be bought at too heavy a cost. It is a significant fact that the government is very much concerned with the protection of money. It is far easier

to run down and convict the counterfeiter than many another evil-doer whose more serious offense against man is apparently of lighter concern to the powers that be than is a direct offense against Mammon.

Of late years, however, we have done something to protect the individual not only against those who would depreciate and adulterate his coin, but against those other counterfeiters and adulterators who have been singularly and shamefully immune,—the traffickers in impure food. Not yet have we given this offense the vigorous legal treatment which has made the debasing of the coinage so unprofitable. It is still safer by far to poison babies than it is to “sweat” money. But we have made some progress, and it is no longer incumbent on the untrained housewife to do all that is to be done toward the protection of the family meal. Some day, when we think of all our “breaking of bread” as an expression of our fellowship with the Master, we shall have a “pure food law” that will make the poisoning of food as abhorrent, even in the midst of our industrial warfare, as is the old-fashioned device of poisoning wells in the international warfare of to-day.

Yet we have no greater need of effective legislation on behalf of pure food than we have of well-thought-out and well-enforced laws on behalf of pure fun. Corrupt fun is more seriously de-

moralizing than corrupt food. "That which goes into the mouth" can destroy only the body. But there is a vast amount of laughter which comes out of the mouth that is destructive of all that is worth while in man and in society.

It is not enough that we eliminate the grosser forms of sensuous pleasure. It is not enough that we prohibit the sale of such drugs and drinks as are most obviously demoralizing. The appetite for pleasure is as natural as the appetite for food. Put bad food within reach of the people under conditions which make it immediately cheap to the consumer, and at the same time extraordinarily profitable to the purveyor, and bad food will be bought and sold in large quantities. More effective measures of a more affirmative character must be taken. We must make good food abundant, and must put it within the means of all.

And this we must do with our amusements. Men and women will have them, tainted or not, and they will have them of a corrupt kind, if such can be had cheaper than the better quality of fun and frolic, and if there are big returns to the few in serving to the many these poisoned pleasures. The wrong kind of recreation must be made unprofitable, obviously and very seriously unprofitable, to those who purvey it, as well as to those who purchase it, and the right kind of recreation must be made accessible and attractive, and made

indeed the only kind that is legally available, if we are to teach our cities and nations, as well as individuals, to laugh unto God.

It was said of Mrs. Catherine Booth, one of the most remarkable mothers that ever lived, that she gave all her children to understand while yet very young that she would not tolerate a bad child. She made good attractive, but she outlawed iniquity in a very positive way.

"Mother," said little Mary, "I don't like the way Willie sets traps for the birds, and I prayed God he wouldn't let him catch any." "That's right, Mary," replied the mother, who had not much control over Willie. "But that isn't all, mother," went on the little girl, who had already shown a good deal of positive character. "I kicked his nasty old traps all to pieces."

Perhaps the little girl's spirit left something to be desired, but there is vast need of more of her affirmative mood in dealing with the traps which beset the pleasure fields of modern life. It is the business of good people to be aggressively, militantly good. It is for them even now to rule the earth, if they will but enter into the power of Jesus. Much of his cross and his suffering they must know first;—the mood of an infinite and inexhaustible compassion must be theirs. But there must also be the mood of the throne and the crown, the mood of a royal and irresistible authority. And, even as we repeat, in our sufferings

with and for the guilty, the death of his cross, so may we anticipate, in our sense of power and our assertion of dominion, the glory of that day when "the kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ."

CHAPTER IX

SPORT AND EVANGELISM

LAW, to be effective, must be the expression of public sentiment. Public sentiment is itself a growth, and depends for its value upon long and painstaking and intelligent cultivation. It is no more an accident, or a beneficence thrust upon us, than is the Burbank potato, the navel orange, or the first-prize chrysanthemum at the floral show. All that makes public sentiment to-day better than in the days when the favorite pastimes of the Romans were duels between gladiators and the tormenting of Christians in the arena, has been won, from age to age, at the cost of innumerable unrecorded martyrdoms. A well-developed and morally fruitful public sentiment has always to be watered liberally with the blood of persecuted moral pioneers.

The martyrs are the first evangelists of all progress. They do not get the crowd, but, to use a popular expression, the crowd "gets them." After them come in time the evangelists of the multitude, who are often "preferred before them." Public sentiment of to-day owes to these earlier voices what the farmer owes to the investigator

at the experiment station, what the manufacturer and the salesman owe to the inventor, what the western city owes to the emigrant train.

It is an interesting fact that certain of those who are most prominent to-day in the domain of religious evangelism have come from the field of professional sport. There are others besides the Rev. William A. Sunday to whom this remark applies, though he is probably the most conspicuous of his class. That he is even yet everywhere commonly known as "Billy" Sunday is significant of the fact that he still carries the cognomen of the sporting world, while his methods of preaching are likewise more athletic and "sporty" than they are formally intellectual or conventionally devout.

This is not said by way of criticism, since we are not concerned here with either criticism or commendation. It is said to emphasize the fact that the field of sport has already invaded the field of evangelism, and that it is quite time that evangelism took more heed of the province of sport. It is time that the principles which have cost the pioneers so much to establish in the domain of religion, and in the affairs of state, should be applied vigorously, and, so far as possible, popularly, to the province of play. We need an active propaganda of the naturalness, wholesomeness, and seriousness of the mirth-loving mood. We need to preach as part of our evangel-

ism the Christ of the playground. Especially do we need to emphasize the sovereignty of a universal and uniform social law, as pertinent and implacable with respect to the right use of laughter as with respect to the right use of liturgy, or literature, or law.

Evangelism has done something, probably too much, in the way of *prohibition*, though that has been confined to but a limited section of the area of recreation. The trinity of dubious amusements,—the card party, the theater, and the dance,—have been discussed by evangelists, and preachers of the evangelistic type, with an exclusiveness perhaps even more objectionable than the occasional coarseness of such discussion, or the more habitual indiscriminateness with which these particular play forms of the adolescent period and of adult life have been denounced. Other forms of amusement of very questionable value have been left practically unconsidered, and, what is yet more serious, moods of fretfulness, melancholy, ill-temper, and morbid religiosity, vastly more mischievous than many a harshly censored merry-making of uninstructed young people, have been passed over in silence, or more or less implicitly justified and promoted, by evangelists themselves.

Evangelism has made altogether too much, judged by the precept and practice of Jesus, of the appeal to fear, of a morbid emphasis upon

human mortality, and of the portrayal of disembodied delights. Its goodness has too often been of an ephemeral, sentimental sort which could be maintained in young people only by the continual cultivation of unyouthful habits of thought, or of intellectual and spiritual attitudinizings which do not make for either mental or moral character. There is great need of the heartiness and unaffectedness of the playground in our presentation of religion, especially in its presentation to the young.

Improvement there is in a marked degree. Largely through the young people's societies of various names and kinds, there has come to pass a much more healthful type of religious appeal, which has, in a measure, banished the unreal appeal of other days. There is an interesting contrast between the New England "pulpit saint" of a hundred years ago, the Rev. Edward Payson, D. D., and the still more widely known minister of another church in the same city, "Father Endeavor" Clark. The familiarity of the later title is no more in contrast with the formality of the earlier one than is the general appeal of their individuality and of the types of teaching which they represent. Notwithstanding that there was much of natural humor in Payson's make-up, ready mother-wit, facetious pleasantry, and a keen sense of the ridiculous, all these were covered up by the somber spiritual moods of the day. It is

evident to any candid reader of Payson's biography, however generous may be the reader's appreciation of the great moral and intellectual values of his ministry, that his religious experience lacked a normal and healthful human cheerfulness. Without the slightest desire to depreciate the one man, or to embarrass the other with anything like personal adulation, it is pertinent to this discussion to point out that, in the contrast between Edward Payson and Francis E. Clark, there is something which is much more than personal. It is rather a social token of the progress which we have made toward a truer view of the relation between sportiveness and spirituality. The more modern type of religion is suffused with a glow of healthfulness and good cheer which was conspicuously absent from the religion of a century ago.

The same fact is emphasized in a different way by the evangelism of "Billy" Sunday, to which reference has already been made. No such evangelist would have been possible a hundred, or even fifty, years ago. This may be taken by some as a sign of decadence on our part, but one need not make himself sponsor for the methods of Mr. Sunday as a whole, and especially those phases of his evangelism which have given offense to the sense of reverence in some of us, to maintain that such an evangelism, judged in a large way, is a part of the approach of religion to the

naturalness and spontaneity of every-day life. It is, indeed, possible to think of it, with all reasonable reservations allowed for, as a phase of our more vital and more universal interpretation of the central Christian doctrine, the doctrine of the incarnation of the divine in human form. "Getting next to men" is another way of "making the Word flesh," of putting the majesty and mystery of the divine into terms of the simplest and most ordinary experiences of the human. A Christ who makes no appeal to the ball-field lacks somewhat of being as human to-day as Jesus was at Nazareth and Galilee.

The appeal can hardly work widely except as it works both ways. The pulpit cannot long expect to attract the ball-field if the ball-field does not attract the pulpit. If we are to get evangelism *out* of the field of sport, we must get evangelism *into* the field of sport. By this is meant much more than the winning of personal recruits for the pulpit from among the professionals of track and field, and more than the gain of personal converts for the churches from the same or allied sections of the social life. With all its importance, this is almost incidental to the main thing, which is not securing preachers or converts from any one class, but rather the transfiguration of our whole presentation of the gospel into a closer and closer correspondence with all the aspects of real living, thus penetrating those human

pursuits which seem most secular with the very essence and vitality of religion.

This is our task, and it is a tremendous task from whichever point it is viewed. To make religion as natural and unaffected as a game of ball, or, for that matter, a game of "blindman's-buff," or any like sport, is no easier than it is to make a game of ball, or a merry-go-round as genuinely harmonious with our sense of a moral order, and with our faith in the dominance and permanence of the unseen, as we have been accustomed to think the song of praise or the voice of prayer. Yet both of these things we are bound to attempt and to achieve, if we are to carry out to the full the implicit program of Jesus.

It is at this point that the large significance of the question of amusements comes into view. Amusements are seen to be no longer incidental to what one has finely designated "the Christian view of God and the world," but they are a most important medium of exchange by which commerce is established and increased between life and faith. Get young people to see this and you have given them the most vital conception of life and of religion that you can give them. Their amusements are no longer an aside, a by-path into which they seek permission to go with something of the unconfessed feeling which led the little boy, about to depart for a two or three weeks' "good time," to say, with boyish frankness, "Good-bye,

God; we're going on a vacation." Whether we admit it or not, that is the way many of us feel about our fun. Too few will venture to think of "religious exercises" as adding to the zest of even a church social. To propose them at an ordinary house-party in even a confessedly Christian home would produce something like consternation, although such consternation might be politely concealed. The "worldly" would regard such a proposal as an infringement on their fun, as taking off it the keen edge of pleasure; while the "religious" would be quite as likely to feel that the mixture of praying and playing was unfortunate and bordered upon irreverence.

"Be good, and you'll be happy," we sometimes say with a certain lightness, in lieu of saying "good-bye." It is very much to be questioned whether many of us seriously believe that this is so. The modern humorist's version of the saying, "Be good, and you'll be lonesome," answers much more nearly to the average actual conviction as to the facts in the case. Commonly we think of downright goodness as a pretty serious business which has to be got through with in the best way we can; but the connection between goodness and a good time for just common, normal men and women is not felt to be very close. And religion is thought of in some quarters as something rather distinct from goodness, and of even a more serious cast.

It is because there is, in the thought of most people, this contrast between praying and playing, that there needs to be more communion between them. Each of these exercises needs qualities which ordinarily belong to the other. Our praying is very much in need of the simple sincerity and self-unconsciousness of play. Our playing needs more of the thoughtfulness and purity of purpose which belong to prayer. We have a right to be as natural when we pray as when we play. It is not impossible to keep "in tune with the Infinite" in the midst of laughter and frolic and song. It is neither irreverent nor irrelevant to quote in this connection the words commonly associated with the one experience which is most profoundly serious and most overflowing joyous, "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." The fact that marriage can be most highly serious and joyous at one and the same time is a token of the ministry with which a living faith may serve the ends of a lively fun, and a well balanced and vigorously sincere fun may serve the ends of an uplifting, inspiring, and comforting faith. Whenever they are well mated in one person, they make the most charming and convincing kind of Christian in the world.

It is a part of the business of modern evangelism to produce such Christians. Until we do, the appeal of religion will fall short of conscious acceptance and clear-cut confession in a multitude

who belong of right to the Church of God. Until we do, the realms of amusement will be too much given over, as they are now, to those who make them mighty for evil, instead of being, as they should be, mighty for good. To treat the laughter side of life as a barely tolerated province, where the Christian may go under guard, as it were, is a mistake of no small consequence to both sides. It is akin to the mistake of those who would divorce strength and beauty, or nutriment and flavor. There is no good reason why the life that is good should not be made attractive as well.

How is this evangelism to be achieved? Certainly not by despising the sense of reverence, on the one hand, by forcing the facetious into sacred places, nor by formalizing fun, on the other hand, by intruding the aspect of seriousness upon the resorts of amusement and mirth. This would be to make both unreal, and what is wanted is that the reality of each shall be made to strengthen and enlarge the reality of the other. To interrupt prayer with laughter, or laughter with prayer, is artificial and inapt. But to touch the spirit of prayer with the spirit of honest laughter, and to touch laughter with the fine inner quality of heart-felt prayer, is to perform an invaluable service to both. Above all, to claim all life as Christian in intention, and to make all life Christian in fact, is the very end for which all legitimate evangelism exists.

But how to do it,—that is the question. How can we work to a common end through things which seem so inevitably diverse as sport and evangelism? The answer is not so difficult as it seems, if we really believe what has already been said. If we want more of the tone-quality of every-day life in our religion, and more of the tone-quality of religion in our every-day life, we shall get this happy result as we get every other good thing, by talking about it and going after it. Not by merely condemning some kinds of sport, nor by just caricaturing some kinds of religion, but by trying to see both sides of life from a common view-point, and measuring all that we do with regard to one and the same great end of being,—after this manner shall we find the unity and ministry which lie between them.

To revert to the illustration of the marriage tie, because in this relationship seriousness and happiness are rightfully blended in the highest degree, it is possible to secure a kind of unity between married people by subordinating the one to the other. The man may be dominant, in which case the masculine will rule in the home. Or the woman may be dominant, in which case the feminine will be first. But the truer unity lies in the recognition of both, in a fine balancing of masculine and feminine, so that the home gets the benefit of the equal ministry of each. This is the type of home that the world is seeking to-day.

And it is the type of religion that the world needs, and that the world more or less consciously wants. We do not want a worldly church, and we do not want a churchly world. We want the fulness of the human in both. We want an evangelism big enough to take in both, and to give both full play in the perfecting of life.

The individual attitude toward individual expressions both of the play life and of the prayer life will differ. Some of us are ritualists in religion, and some of us are not. Some of us cannot abide an effervescence of enthusiasm which overflows in undignified demonstrations in the house of God ; others of us are equally impatient of the dignity which runs to the repetition of set forms and the sounding of sonorous phrases. We are slowly learning a larger tolerance of the many methods by which men find God and express their equally sincere allegiance to him.

Why should we expect that we shall all agree as to the forms of pleasure in which we find our amusement and recreation ? Why should we be less tolerant of one another in this respect than in respect to varieties of religious faith and worship ? If the main thing is, as here contended, that all life shall be controlled from above ; that, whether we laugh or whether we lift up our hands in prayer, a common spirit of sincerity and spontaneity shall be ours ; that sport and religion shall be equally shot through and through

with a divine purpose and a big, brotherly spirit of co-operation, why cannot we be a little tolerant at "both ends of the game," if we may put it in that vernacular way?

It is not half so important that we either condemn or justify dance and theater, or any other definite and particular type of recreation, as it is that we get together as to the real ends of play itself, and as to the unity of such ends with all other ends which men and women have a right to seek. Let us all admit that religion and recreation are not two things in spirit and purpose, but fundamentally one, and let us make this the heart of our evangel, whether we talk spirituality or sport, and we shall speedily get rid on all sides of a lot of unreality which now passes for the spiritual and of a lot of bestiality which now passes for sport. We have dealt both with religion and with pleasure altogether too much from the standpoint of the external and the incidental, and not half enough with regard to the spirit and purpose in and for which they exist. It is not *how* you pray,—whether on your knees or on your feet, whether with your own unstudied words or with the carefully considered sentences of another,—that counts, so much as the *inward motives* and the *valid objectives* of your prayer,—what you want of God, and whether, after all, you really do want it.

Here is the old Puritan divine's way of putting

it,—John Trapp's "Golden Statement." "God respecteth not the arithmetic of our prayers, how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers, how neat they are; nor the geometry of our prayers, how long they are; nor the music of our prayers, how melodious they are; nor the logic of our prayers, how methodical they are; but the divinity of our prayers, how heart-sprung they are. Not gifts but graces prevail in prayer."

Why think that God is less tolerant with respect to our playing than with respect to our praying? Why make the minor matters of form more important in our evangel of recreation than we make them, when we deal wisely, in our evangel of religion? If parents can watch their children playing in the streets in the early evening with a large unconcern as to just what form the pastimes take, so long as they are controlled by a spirit of carefulness, of mutual consideration, and of healthy enthusiasm, why should we be more rigid in representing the attitude of our Heavenly Father toward the manner in which we elders play? Is not this the test with our fathers and mothers here,—that whether the children work or play, they shall do all healthfully and helpfully, so as to serve life and growth? Why not make this the test also with God?

There is not intended here, either directly or indirectly, any apology for any kind of physically or morally unhealthful play. Neither is it con-

tended that one expression of religion is as good as another. The claim is rather that the fault of our ordinary teaching, with respect both to religion and to recreation, has been that we have treated mistakes in both instances too much from the outside. We have put all our emphasis upon symptoms rather than upon inner conditions. "Out of the heart are the issues of life," whether we talk of life moral or life physical. Make religion sincere and it will in time find its own best expression. Make recreation moral in purpose, fill the whole spirit of it with the sense of God as filling all life, and the more mischievous forms of recreation will slough off of themselves. Evangelize both at the heart and you will most effectively and thoroughly evangelize both to the utmost circumference.

There is an expression of the ball-field which is sometimes heard also in the business world, "Play ball." That is, quit shamming and trifling and fooling around the edges of things, and get at the real business for which you are here. Now this, which is so close to the spirit of sport, is the spirit which is sorely needed in all our evangelism, whether we deal directly with what we call the sacred or the secular,—a distinction which is itself a mischievous misuse of terms. Religion needs to "play ball," to get down to reality, to put far from it all shamming, and to deal in a really big way with really big things. When this is done, being

religious will be as natural, as bracingly attractive, as the heartiest kind of honest sport.

And our talk of recreation in pulpit and pew needs the same invigorating directness about it. The very heart of evangelism is the insistence upon God as the sovereign fact of life. Let us so insist with respect to play. Play as you please, so that you please to play in harmony with the rules of the game;—not the sport itself conceived as the game, but the game conceived as nothing less than the object and end of life. To be “Billy Sundayish” for a moment, “quit kidding and play ball.” Quit putting the incidental first, whether you pray or play, whether you laugh or look up in spiritual appeal, and get before you the real goal of all your human goings, which is, *to be your utmost for time and eternity, and to help others to be the same.* That’s the game. We need to insist upon it as directly as the “coach” insists that both team and individual player shall “play ball.” Evangelism, indeed, is a larger kind of “coaching.” The evangelist needs the immediateness of the coach on the athletic field. The coach needs the far-sightedness of the evangelist. And life in all its phases needs the qualities of both. We need to put more laughter into our thought of God and more thought of God into our laughter; and to do this we must put more of downright directness into all life.

CHAPTER X

THE DIFFUSION OF DELIGHT

IT is much to feel in an individual way the moral values of laughter, and to seek such values with a clear perception of the one paramount purpose for which we live. It is hardly less important, in the midst of our complex modern life, to see the social bearings of the subject, and to work both for a better legislation with respect to play, and for a more compelling public sentiment which shall make sport as high-minded as religion, and which, inversely, shall interpret religion in terms of human experience as spontaneous and vigorous as sport. But, if we are to save our amusements for the largest individual and social ends, there is still something to be desired, not less important than either of these. And that something is the recognition of the fact that the salvation of the laughter side of life depends, in great degree, upon what is here phrased as the diffusion of delight.

There is a term much used in our day, commonly thought of as a medical expression, but in reality much more widely employed, which, when applied to the amusement problem, goes far to explain what is the matter with the play life of

the world to-day. That is the word *congestion*. The dictionary defines it in a pathological way as "an abnormal accumulation of blood in the vessels of an organ; as, congestion of the brain." Everybody knows how serious such congestion may become, and all who admit the physical phenomena of disease as having reality, will also admit that much of our trouble of a bodily character is due to congestion at some point or other in our physical system. All manner of fevers and pains and consequent disablement and death proceed from congestion of that which, when properly diffused and circulated, is the source of strength and of life itself.

Nor is this less true in a social way. The "congestion of population" in our great cities is a familiar complaint among the sociologists of the day. "Back to the land," is the cry of those who maintain, with much show of reason, that a more equable distribution of population would make for much more of sane, clean living throughout the world.

Of similar import is the complaint against the "congestion of capital" in the financial world. William Booth was an evangelist, rather than an agitator or even a reformer, yet in that powerful social tract, "In Darkest England," he says succinctly, "It is the congestion of capital that is evil, and the labor question will never be finally solved until every laborer is his own capitalist."

Whatever we may think of this particular utterance, or of the proposed remedies with which men seek to-day to overcome congestion in the fields of the common work and the common wealth, it is evident that, before there is anything like a "final solution" of the big world-issues which vex us to-day, we are going to distribute authority and opportunity in some way among the many much more than such diffusion now prevails. A wider diffusion of intelligence and character and social activity and responsibility is the only way in which the common good can be realized in increasing degree.

The same considerations apply with equal force to those phases of life which we are especially considering. If the body suffers from congestion of blood here and there; if every country to-day is more or less the victim of the modern tendency toward the congestion of population in great cities; if the industrial world exhibits such deplorable conditions as Booth describes in his "Darkest England" because of the congestion of capital, it is likewise true that, both in an individual and in a social way, our pleasure life is diseased in the same manner, and the same remedy of a more equable distribution must be sought. We shall never get a sound amusement life until we have democratized it, or, to use broader terms, until we have leveled and equalized it both in a personal and in a collective way. "Every valley shall be

filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough ways smooth ; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

So said the ancient prophet, and the words are applied by one of later time to the ministry of the great forerunner of Jesus, whose work it was to announce and to usher in the kingdom of God. So, also, may we use these words to-day as the religious expression of the world's demand for democracy, in the widest sense of that term, as a remedy for those evils which we suffer by reason of the congestions which afflict humankind. Democracy is but another word for the diffusion of life, and the "more abundant life" can come to pass only as life is everywhere more widely distributed.

Our amusements are full of unsightly hills and valleys which will have to be leveled down and filled up before we make the kingdom of laughter to become the kingdom of God. Inequality, perverted emphasis, is everywhere. The world of laughter is a world of caricature, for caricature is emphasis out of proportion. It is the exaggeration of one feature as against another. The essence of beauty is harmony. So also is it with strength. Our play life to-day is neither beautiful nor strong, because it lacks harmony, proportion, distribution. We need the leveling process to a much greater degree than most of us suspect, if

we are really to learn what it means to laugh unto God. We need it with reference to the present specializing of those who play. We need it with reference to the special forms and seasons of play. And we need it particularly with reference to the present limitations of laughter and amusement in relation to the individual life.

There has been much talk of recent years about the mischief of professional athletics in schools. The talk has done something to create a better sentiment and to compel wiser legislation in this regard. "Professionals" are barred from the sporting events of practically all educational institutions to-day. But there is still altogether too much professionalism about the players and the play. Field days and athletic events are looked at by the bulk of the student body, not from the standpoint of participants, but from the standpoint of interested and partisan spectators. Only a handful get whatever benefit there is in the actual physical exercise involved, and these get the exercise in such perverted and exaggerated form that it is often more harmful than beneficial to them.

To say nothing of the mischievous excitement which results from partisan competition in school sports, the gambling which is with great difficulty suppressed, and the extravagances of side-line "rooting" and convivial celebrations of much overvalued victories, there must be taken into account the ordinary failure of gymnastic training

for the multitude of the students, who have no enthusiasm except for "sporty" athletics. And when every allowance is made for the improvement, within recent years, of school discipline with regard to the whole matter of school sport, there is still a large reckoning to the bad, because play is too much regarded as a specialty and not as the common right and property of all. The diffusion of athletic discipline throughout the whole student body is still the prime need of school athletics. No amount of shouting for the successes of the local team can ever compensate for the failure to give every boy and girl in school the delight and benefit of a full physical discipline.

This is just as true for the rest of us as it is for the boys and girls in school. All of us take our play altogether too much by proxy. All of us are too much concerned with professional achievement and the victories of our favorites, and too little concerned with the securing of whatever benefit there is in physical prowess and skill for each and every one. We are professionalized to death. And it is doubtful whether at any point we suffer more serious harm from professionalism than we do by turning over so much of our play and our enjoyment to a class of specialized entertainers. If the waters of joy, which too often are veritable destructive freshets and swamp-making inundations, were distributed as they ought to be over all the areas of common life, the saving to

society of the bodies and the souls of men would be great beyond the power of words to say.

If it be contended that some professionalism is necessary throughout the whole range of life, this may be admitted without consenting to its prevalence to any such extent as is true to-day. There is very much less need of professionalism all along the line than most of us are ready to allow. The whole trend of our religion, and of the democracy which is most akin to fundamental Christianity, is away from all monopoly of either goods or good. And it is just as much away from the monopoly of laughter as it is away from the monopoly of labor and the products of toil.

To-morrow will make vastly more of play as the common right and duty of us all, on all days as well as holidays, in the later years of life as well as in the youthful years. There will still be special entertainers, no doubt, trained athletes, and performers of varied types, but there will be much more attention paid to the training of all in the arts of amusement, for their own sakes and for the sake of the contribution which all may make toward the common joy. There is, in fact, a much more equable distribution of ability on all lines than the world has yet been willing to concede. Massachusetts may not be able to raise as large geraniums or pumpkins as California, and her climate may never permit Boston suburbs to compete with the suburbs of Los Angeles in the

cultivation of the orange and the olive and other semi-tropical fruits; but when all the returns are in, it will be found that the East has its own contribution to make to the tables of the world, and that in relation to the sum of human service which is needed for the common comfort and joy, one part of the world has importance as well as another. So also will it be found at length that all men and women are gifted in their own way in producing the fruits of joy, and that the multitude have their own contribution to make to the fulness of human delight.

There will always be holidays, no doubt. But all days will take on very much more of the holiday character, before we are through with human progress toward the heavenly mood on earth. There is very much less danger that the Sabbath will eventually be lost than there is happy promise that by and by we are going to make Sabbaths of all our days, by recognizing the essential holiness of all our hours. Even now there is more desecration of week-days than of Sundays, and we are beginning to realize that we can save one day unto God only by saving them all. Youth will always play more sportively than age. But as already indicated, the prophet's vision of playful youth and peaceful, smiling age is one vision. We shall give the children more of what we have beforetime reserved for age,—more of place in the counsels of both local and national govern-

ments. But we shall also give age more of what we have long regarded as the special liberty of youth,—more of laughter, more of the amusement life, more of the *abandon* of play. Half of our getting old is forgetting how to be amused. We ought to diffuse through all our days the merriment which we have been too much inclined to hold as the exclusive privilege of youthful years.

There is one thing more to be said. The deepest part of the problem of amusement lies still farther out from the shores of specialism and monopoly. It is more than a matter of ceasing from the emphasis of special performers who do our playing for us by proxy, and giving all men and women everywhere the full opportunity to express themselves in a sportive way. It is more than the diffusion of the holiday mood throughout the days between holidays, or the assertion of the equal right of age and youth to happiness and mirth. Our amusements will profit by all such diffusion of delight, and only as we so distribute play are we going to save it from the evils of its present congested state. But we must also learn that as work is a curse when it is only work, so also play is a mischief when it is only play. The diffusion of delight means more than making play accessible to all, at all times, and at every stage of life. It means, in a way, making play itself unnecessary by making our very labors an amusement and a delight.

In one of his best writings, *The Gospel for an Age of Doubt*, Dr. Henry van Dyke recites the following striking lines, introducing the verse with these illuminating words in prose: "That is the debt which every child of God owes, not only to God, but to his own soul—to find the real joy of living." Then follows this brief but telling poem:

" 'Joy is a duty,'—so with golden lore
The Hebrew rabbis taught in days of yore.
And happy human hearts heard in their speech
Almost the highest wisdom man can reach.

" But one bright peak still rises far above,
And there the Master stands whose name is Love,
Saying to those whom heavy tasks employ,
'Life is divine when duty is a joy.' "

Here is expressed the heart of what is meant by the diffusion of delight. No man has solved the problem of amusement until he has found it unnecessary to be amused. He only is really entertained who does not have to be entertained, to whom life itself is entertainment all the time, whose work entertains him more than any so-called entertainment can. We shall never solve the problem of labor till we make all men's work such that there is full opportunity for pleasure in it. And we shall never solve the problem of pleasure till we make our amusements, in the main at least, real employments, and employments that are suffused through and through with the restful-

ness, the enthusiasm, and the ecstasy of play. Though this may seem to some as a dream, it is the goal toward which we move both in the industrial world and in the world of rational recreation. Some day our factories will be playgrounds, and our playgrounds factories, and there will be a blending of creation and recreation which will be the salvation of both.

Until then it is our duty, and our delight, to seek individually to realize this ideal in ourselves, and to promote it in society at large. Already there are many who have attained, who do not have to stop play in order to work, or to stop work in order to play, but who are doing both all the time, working for the joy of others when they play, and truly playing for their own amusement when they work. There is no amusement problem so far as they themselves are concerned. All life has caught and holds the glow of everlasting youth. They are laughing for God while they labor, and laboring for God while they laugh. It is with them no question of special persons, or special places, or special seasons and ages; but whether they are alone or with others, whether it is a holiday or recreation hour or just some common day and some undistinguished period of the day, whether they are reckoned seven or seventy years young, they play while they work and they work while they play, and the sheer delight of living is the richest delight they can know. This

was the great Apostle's "finally," was it not? "Finally, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice." In other words, learn how to make amusement no problem by finding amusement in every problem.

The secret of wealth is not in finding it in a box, but in finding it everywhere. So also is the secret of happiness, of laughter, of fun. They are always on the way to become jaded who seek entertainment in entertainments. Theirs is perennial pleasure who find enjoyment in all things, whether they are reckoned enjoyments or not. There is no work harder than fun when fun is made a business, and no fun that is lighter than work when business is made what it ought to be,—enjoyment and delight. And this is possible, even for the man who cannot choose his work to-day, if he will steadfastly hold fast this ideal of the diffusion of delight, and will study to make work as enjoyable as play.

Laughing unto God means a great deal more than making our fun wholesome when we are "funning," making our recognized amusements personally and socially sound. They laugh best for God who have learned how to spread the fertilizing spirit of fun over all the broad acres of the serious business of life.

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